

(Escaped Federal Prisoners)

SUBJECT Arthur Barker (Death of)

FILE NUMBER 76-4125

SECTION NUMBER 1

SERIALS 1-26

TOTAL PAGES 174

PAGES RELEASED 155

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EXEMPTION(S) USED B3 B7c B7d

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United States Department  
Washington, D. C.

EAT:DM

Time - 8:00 A. M.

January 13, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

Mr. Tolson .....  
Mr. Nathan .....  
Mr. E. A. Tamm .....  
Mr. Clegg .....  
Mr. Coffey .....  
Mr. Crowell .....  
Mr. Egan .....  
Mr. Foxworth .....  
Mr. Glavin .....  
Mr. Harlan .....  
Mr. Lester .....  
Mr. Quinn .....  
Miss Gandy .....  
.....

Mr. Pieper called me at this time to advise that the five prisoners who are missing from Alcatraz have been located on the beach on the island. While they were successful in getting outside the confines proper of the penitentiary, they did not escape from the Island. Mr. Pieper stated that he was informed that two of the men were dead, two wounded and one was apparently all right and that as soon as he can get additional information he would call me.

At 9:15 A. M. Mr. Pieper called to state that the five escapees were all in custody and that the prisoners had all been replaced in the cell block. The persons who were escaping are Arthur Barker, Dale Stamphill, Rufus McCain, Henry Young and William Martin (negro). Arthur Barker and Dale Stamphill have been wounded but the others are apparently all right. Mr. Pieper states that as soon as he can get complete and detailed information, he will notify us, and in answer to his question as to whether he should initiate an investigation of the facts surrounding the escape, I told him he should do so if full and complete information is furnished to us, but that if the prison authorities intend to compete with us in the matter of investigation, that we should not conduct any investigation whatsoever.

Respectfully,

*EAT*

E. A. Tamm

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INDEXED

76-4175-1

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

JAN 17 1939

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

PEF:RMB

January 13, 1939

Time: 10:00 A. M.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. E. A. TANN

Re: Alcatraz Escape

Mr. Tolson  
Mr. Nathan  
Mr. E. A. Tamm  
Mr. Clegg  
Mr. Coffey  
Mr. Crowl  
Mr. Egan  
Mr. Forworth  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Harbo  
Mr. Lester  
Mr. McIntire  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Quinn Tamm  
Mr. Tracy  
Miss Gandy

Mr. Bennett, Director of Bureau of Prisons, called this morning, and in your absence I talked to him.

He advised of the attempt which five prisoners made to escape from Alcatraz this morning. He further stated that the warden had notified the San Francisco Office and requested their cooperation in the investigation. Mr. Bennett informed that the newspaper-men were "swamping" him, and that he would send a copy of the news release which gave the details. He also stated that he might have to go to San Francisco himself on the matter.

The news release containing the details is attached.

Respectfully,

P. E. FOXWORTH

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INDEXED

I ENCL. T

I didn't receive this  
until 12:10 P. M. I think  
like this should be promptly  
forwarded to me.

N.

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| FBI - BOSTON                    |         |

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JAN 14 1939  
FBI - BOSTON

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January 13, 1939

NEWS RELEASE

Five prisoners were defeated in their attempt to escape  
Alcatraz Prison this morning.

Arthur R. Barker serving life for kidnaping  
Dale Staphill under life sentence for kidnaping  
Rufus Roy McCain serving sentence of 99 years  
for national bank robbery and kidnaping  
Henry Young under sentence of 20 years for  
robbery of national bank  
William Martin under sentence of 25 years for  
armed robbery of post office.

Were involved.

The escape was discovered about 4:00 a.m. when it was  
found they had sawed out of the cell block. They were later  
discovered on the shore by guards, and in resisting recapture,  
three were injured. Two of them had gotten into the water. The  
Coast Guard and the San Francisco Police detailed boats to aid  
in the recapture. These boats were supplemented by the prison  
launch.

In some manner, we do not yet understand, the prisoners  
apparently managed to obtain a saw and with it got out of their  
cells and through the exterior window of the cell block. In the  
dense fog enveloping the island they managed to elude the officer  
guarding the outside of the cell block and got as far as the shore  
before they were apprehended. There was no evidence that they had  
any help from the outside and no boats were found in the vicinity  
of the island.

Dale Staphill was shot in the leg and probably not  
seriously wounded. Arthur (Doc) Barker received a wound in the  
leg and also one in the head which may be serious. Martin's  
injury was apparently not dangerous.

The entire episode is being investigated by the Bureau  
Department.

76-4175-2

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JOHN EDGAR HOOVER  
DIRECTOR

EAT:JW

Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

January 13, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

Re: ESCAPE ATTEMPT AT  
ALCATRAZ

Director James V. Bennett, of the Bureau of Prisons, called this afternoon to advise for your information that he is leaving later today for San Francisco in order to take personal charge of the situation at Alcatraz. I advised Mr. Bennett that you had issued instructions directly to the Special Agent in Charge at San Francisco to render all the assistance possible in connection with this matter.

Respectfully,

EDWARD A. TAMM

I advised SAC at  
San Francisco.

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| FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION |         |
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| FUG. S.                         |         |

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JEH: SBR

January 13, 1939

Time: 11:55 AM

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. Tamm

Re: Attempted Escape at Alcatraz

I telephoned SAC Pieper at San Francisco and told him that the Department wants us to make a very thorough investigation of this matter. SAC Pieper stated that he had already sent Agents J. H. Rice and A. E. Farland over there and that he was going over himself in a short while. I advised SAC Pieper that he was not to say anything except that he had instructions to investigate this matter and that if any trouble arose with Kardon Johnson to get in touch with me immediately. I further advised SAC Pieper that he was to report to me directly and he stated that he would call me as soon as he got anything comprehensive.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nathan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Gandy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Felt \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Harbo \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Lester \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Metcalfe \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_

JAN 13 1939

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76-4175-4

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
JAN 16 1939  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

8

Los Angeles, California  
January 17, 1939.

Special Agent in Charge  
San Francisco, California

RE: ALCATRAZ ATTEMPTED ESCAPE  
January 13, 1939

Dear Sir:

There is transmitted herewith the original of Bureau letter dated January 16, 1939, and enclosures therewith, which the Bureau requested be forwarded your office immediately upon their receipt here.

Very truly yours,

VAL C. ZIMMER,  
Special Agent in Charge.

REBURN OF SOURCE. 2.2.1941  
TO URGENT  
AMASD  
cc: Bureau  
encl.  
12.11.33

76-4175-4

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

JAN 24 1939

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

REG. SUP.

9

San Francisco, California,  
January 23, 1939

Special Agent in Charge,  
Los Angeles, California

~~PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL~~

Dear Sir:

RE: ARTHUR E. BARKER alias DDC (deceased);  
DALE STANPHILL, RUFUS MCCAIN, HENRY  
YOUNG, WILLIAM MARTIN. ESCAPED  
FEDERAL PRISONERS

This office is now conducting an investigation relative to the attempted escape of the above named individuals from Alcatraz Penitentiary on the early morning of January 13, 1939, by sawing their way out of the cells and one of the wall windows, where they got as far as the beach when they were apprehended.

Confidential information furnished to the Director of the Bureau of Prisons, Mr. BENNETT, is to the effect that one [REDACTED] employed at Alcatraz as a guard was "kiting" letters, etc., out of the prison for BARKER and his associates. [REDACTED] left Alcatraz on annual leave which took effect December 23, 1938 and terminated January 16, 1939, when he returned to duty. He stated he spent his leave at his home in [REDACTED] and it is requested that you ascertain discreetly whether or not this is a fact. He is reported to be well known in [REDACTED].

b7c

Another angle is that one [REDACTED] known to the Los Angeles Police Department, their number [REDACTED] might possibly be connected with this escape as an outside contact. This information was also furnished to Mr. BENNETT and our information is that [REDACTED] is now conducting a book and beer joint in Los Angeles. It is requested that you make discreet inquiry as to whether or not he is or has been in Los Angeles during the past year and if he has left the city for how long a period.

b7c

For your information Mr. BENNETT did not divulge the name of his informant; however he requested that this information be obtained and same was authorized by the Director. It is requested that this investigation be expedited.

INDEXED

76-4475

JAN 27 1939

Very truly yours,

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

M. J. L. PLEPER,  
Special Agent in Charge

FUG. SUF.

AEP:MLA

76-347

cc Bureau

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Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
Washington, D. C.

January 13, 1939

M E M O R A N D U M

In connection with the attempted escape of Arthur "Doc" Barker, Dave Stamphill, Henry Young, Rufus Roy McCain and William Martin, alias Martin Tyree, the following information is being set forth as to the particular violation of Federal law pursuant to which each was placed in the custody of the Attorney General of the United States, according to the files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Arthur "Doc" Barker was sentenced in the United States District Court at St. Paul, Minnesota, on May 17, 1935, for his participation in the kidnaping of Edward George Bremer at St. Paul, Minnesota, on January 17, 1934.

Dave Stamphill was found guilty on October 26, 1937, for the violation of the Federal Kidnaping Statute, in the United States District Court at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and on the same day was sentenced to serve the rest of his natural life in a United States Penitentiary with the recommendation that he be incarcerated in the United States Penitentiary, Alcatraz Island, California. This individual escaped from the Oklahoma State Reformatory, Granite, Oklahoma, on February 17, 1935, with other inmates, after killing a guard of that reformatory in making their escape, and subsequently on February 27, 1935, with two other inmates robbed the First National Bank at Seiling, Oklahoma, with the use of firearms, and in order to avoid apprehension kidnaped Doctor Fred Lewis Myers and transported him in his automobile in interstate commerce from Leedy, Oklahoma, to Glazier, Texas.

Henry Young on December 29, 1934, entered a plea of guilty to an indictment returned against him on December 19, 1934, charging him with the robbery of the First National Bank at Lind, Washington, and on December 29, 1934, he was sentenced to a term of twenty years in the custody of the Attorney General on each of two counts to run concurrently, the sentencing Judge recommending the United States Penitentiary, Alcatraz Island, California, as the place of incarceration for this sentence. This individual was paroled from

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| FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION |  |
| JAN 25 1939                     |  |
| DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE           |  |

Memorandum

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January 13, 1939

The Washington State Penitentiary on October 12, 1934, and was cut on parole at the time of the commission of this bank robbery.

On May 30, 1935, at Muskogee, Oklahoma, an indictment was returned charging Rufus Roy McCain with the robbery of the Idabel National Bank, Idabel, Oklahoma, on May 15, 1934, in three counts, and with the violation of the National Motor Vehicle Theft Act in two counts. On June 11, 1935, McCain was sentenced on the bank robbery indictment to twenty years on the first count, twenty-five years on the second count, and ninety-nine years on the third and last count, and fined him \$100.00 on each of these counts, and on the National Motor Vehicle Theft Act indictment, he was sentenced to five years on each of two counts, all sentences to run concurrently and to be served in a Federal Penitentiary designated by the Attorney General.

As to William Martin, alias Martin Tyree, who was received at the United States Penitentiary, Alcatraz Island, California, on March 16, 1937, for Post Office assault and armed robbery to serve twenty-five years, the files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation fail to definitely indicate that this Bureau conducted any investigation resulting in this sentence being imposed as to him.

JEE:RP

January 14, 1939

Time - 8:40 PM

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. TATE

76-4175-5

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

JAN 18 1939

Mr. Pieper called at this time to report his assignment in the investigation of the escape from Alcatraz. He stated that he was speaking with [REDACTED]

b7c  
b7d

[REDACTED] informed Pieper that this is a very bad spot and that some weeks ago he made a report on the situation, stating that he could not see the guard on the gun gallery and that the men on the gun gallery could not see him, and that these particular cells were not visible to the man who is supposed to see them from the gun gallery. [REDACTED] does not recall whether this report was made in a regular form report or in memorandum form.

As for the administrative angle of the prison, Mr. Pieper stated that at the top is the Farden who stands by himself and will not listen to anyone. Then there is Deputy Farden Miller who has his own clique. Miller seems to be a tough, hard-boiled prison official who can't get along with the men. Miller appears to tell the Farden just about what he wants to tell him, and any other information he covers up, he merely answers the questions which the Farden puts to him. The men employed in the prison appear to have been making reports on the things which seem wrong to them and every time they make a report to Miller he takes it as a personal criticism instead of something constructive, with the result that the men have gotten to the point where they no longer make any reports. Mr. Pieper stated, of course, that the morale at the prison is pretty bad.

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[REDACTED] advised Pieper that the situation in the Isolation Section almost makes that section a country club. The D Cell Block is the place where the prisoners want to be. They have the best ventilation there, they have reading material and they are the best cells. [REDACTED] also told Mr. Pieper that the administrative officers at the prison appear to bargain with the prisoners, allowing them to be in whatever cell they desire or next to someone they want to be near, just as long as the prisoners behave. [REDACTED] stat there is absolutely no discipline; that when the guard in the cell block tries to discipline a prisoner he reports to the Deputy Farden who doesn't back the guard up, with the result that the prisoners, when the guard returns to the cell block, just laugh at him.

U. S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE

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Mr. Pieper stated that some of the other guards are coming to the San Francisco office and will probably give more of this type of information, and I told Mr. Pieper to incorporate this information in some sort of a supplement to the regular report.

Mr. Pieper stated that he understands they thoroughly searched the kitchen last night but found nothing of value there, but they did find a meter box saw in the print shop and also a putty knife with a saw blade on one end of it. These two articles were concealed in the print shop. I asked Pieper concerning the searching of the mattresses in the various cells and he stated that they were supposed to have started searching these last night.

Mr. Pieper stated that from the picture of the situation at Alcatraz which he gets he does not believe anyone there is actually corrupt, but it is a question of persons in administrative positions failing to properly handle their jobs, with the resultant break down in the morale. As a matter of fact, [redacted] told Mr. Pieper that it reflected in his efficiency rating that he had attempted to instill some discipline and attempted to remedy situations which appeared wrong, since in the efficiency rating they stated he was hard headed and that he was not the type who should be among the prisoners.

Mr. Pieper mentioned the fact that Mr. Schilder arrived at Alcatraz this morning. I told Pieper that Schilder was no friend of the Bureau and that the Agents should be instructed to give him nothing.

Mr. Pieper also stated that in accordance with my instructions last evening, he called the Warden and informed him as to all the facts in our possession relative to another possible attempted break and also relative to possible attempts to get the Warden.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

JEFFERSON

January 14, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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76-4175-6

I thought you would be interested in the ~~FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION~~ <sup>1</sup> ~~Itinerary report which I have telephonically received from the Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation office JAN 13 1939~~ <sup>2</sup> ~~Francisco upon the attempted escape yesterday of five prisoners from Alcatraz.~~ <sup>3</sup> ~~U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE~~

1. Time element. - I shall first set forth the time elements appearing in this escape in order that you may be familiar with this aspect. There are three prison count checks during the night at Alcatraz. The first is at midnight, the second is at 3:00 a.m. and the third is at 6:00 a.m. The 3:00 a.m. count on the morning of January 13th was made and everybody was found accounted for. At approximately 3:35 a.m., January 13th, one man was missed from D cell block, which is the isolation ward, where the five men who attempted to escape were located. As soon as it was found that one man was missing, the prison guard immediately notified the prison administration as per instructions, not waiting to see if any more prisoners were missing. At 3:42 a.m. an actual count of the tier was made and ~~it was then found that~~ <sup>4</sup> five men were missing, namely, Young, McCain, Barker, Martin and Stamphill. These men all had individual cells adjoining each other. At 4:01 a.m. the general alarm whistle blew and the San Francisco Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was notified, as were the other law enforcement agencies in San Francisco. At 4:10 a.m. Barker and Stamphill were sighted on the shore at Alcatraz and by 4:30 a.m. all of the remaining prisoners who attempted to escape were sighted. At 5:18 a.m. Barker entered the hospital at Alcatraz and at 5:21 a.m. Stamphill was entered in the hospital at Alcatraz. At 5:38 all five of the prisoners had been returned to the prison and at 6:00 o'clock check the count showed all prisoners accounted for.

2. As to the condition of the cells from which the prisoners <sup>5</sup> came <sup>6</sup> Cells 521 through 531 each had two flat bar metal pieces <sup>7</sup> which permitted an aperture of about 10 to 16 inches. Cell 532 <sup>8</sup> had two of the bars on the door cut, which permitted an aperture of 3 to <sup>9</sup> 4 inches. The door bars are square and an examination showed that <sup>10</sup> they had been sawed and filed smooth. The cuts were covered from <sup>11</sup> time to time by paint mixed with floor wax, putty not being used as <sup>12</sup> is generally the practice when such attempts are made. Each prisoner <sup>13</sup> escaped through his own cell door and then crossed the corridor of <sup>14</sup> the corridor <sup>15</sup>

the cell block to the window on the outside wall, where a bar had been broken loose and an outside window with steel framing had been cut out. The escape to the outside was made through this window.

3. As to the tools used.— William Martin, one of the convicts who attempted to escape and who was saved from drowning by Deputy Marshal Miller, has made a statement to the effect that each of the five prisoners who attempted to escape had worked on the bars in his cell and the window when they had a chance, both at night and during the day. It has been ascertained that Barker planned the escape and that the escape was set for consummation for at least a month; that everything was ready and that the prisoners were only waiting for the right foggy night. All of the five prisoners had saw blades and after they had finished the sawing of the bars about a month ago, the blades were thrown into the lavatories on the Island so that any search of the cells or their persons would not disclose the blades. The heavy bar which is on the inside of the outside wall windows, and through which the prisoners escaped, is made of steel, which is supposed to resist any type of cutting. The prisoners could not cut the bar, but they pried it loose with an instrument they made, which is known as a screw-jack, which is about one-half inch in diameter and four inches long, with a bolt on the screw and a groove on the bolt. The use of this caused a tension which snapped the bar several times. The bar was then put back in place, and has been in the condition indicated for at least a month. The saws and the screw-jack used by the prisoners were smuggled into the isolation ward many weeks ago by Stomphill when he, Stomphill, was working in the cell house. After Stomphill smuggled this material into the isolation ward he, Stomphill, then committed a violation of the rules by having a knife in his regular cell, and as a result of this violation Stomphill was then placed in the isolation ward into which he had already smuggled the tools to be used in effecting the escape. The saw blades which each of the prisoners had, went through prison inspection in that they were glued into musical instruments believed to be mouth harps. The saw blades were made in the blacksmith shop. It has also been ascertained that copper will not show up on the mechanical devices for detection of metals, with the result that information has been received that there are a number of knives in the possession of prisoners in the cell house made of copper, which is obtainable in the machine shop at Alcatraz. Information received from the prisoners indicates that the mechanical devices used at Alcatraz to detect smuggled metal are practically useless since they are not sensitive enough to detect the saw blades and knives which are secreted in the mattresses by the prisoners.

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4. As to the method of departure planned from the Island after the escape from within the prison walls.— The five prisoners had planned to get away on a raft. The Agents of the Bureau at San Francisco have recovered a rather crude raft which was being made by the five men at the edge of the water after their escape from within the walls. The lumber for this raft was easily obtainable, not only from the driftwood which is washed up upon the shores at Alcatraz, but also from lumber being used by civilian workmen in making certain improvements and repairs incident to the sewage and water supply on Alcatraz at the present time. This raft was tied together with sheets torn in strips and some of the planks were as thick as three inches. The actual location of the prisoners after they had escaped from within the walls was when they were endeavoring to obtain additional wood for the raft from the dock on the Island of Alcatraz. The men, when apprehended, were nude or just in shorts, their clothing being tied in bundles and tied onto the raft.

5. As to the details of the apprehension.— Barker and Stanphill were sighted first when they were on the shore of the Island at Alcatraz at a point approximately midway on the Golden Gate side. The Coast Guard launch and the Alcatraz launch were throwing lights on that side, and when the two prisoners were sighted they were ordered to halt, and when they did not stop they were fired upon with a .45 automatic and a Thompson Sub-machine gun. McCain and Young were apprehended without injury about one-third of the way from the south tip of the Island, on the side toward San Francisco. They were apprehended at the side of the raft. Martin was pulled out of the water at a point very near to the point of the Island which is nearest to San Francisco.

6. As to the condition of the prisoners.— Barker died last evening. Barker's left femur was broken by a bullet which entered the thigh about the middle of the outer surface and emerged a little lower on the inner surface of the thigh. Another bullet entered the neck in the back below the right ear, and appears to have emerged from the inner angle of the right eye. Stanphill has one wound on the outer part of the upper thigh; another a little lower down on the internal surface of the thigh; and a third lower down on the outer and inner surfaces of the right leg above the ankle.

When Barker was apprehended, he exclaimed to one of the guards: "I am crazy as hell - I should never have tried it."

From information received it would appear that a similar break has been planned by the prisoners who are detailed to the kitchen. It is stated that these prisoners have plans similar to those used by the five who have already attempted to escape, and that the kitchen crew has planned to work on a more elaborate scale and escape, seizing some of the women and children who are members of the families of the guards and employees living on Alcatraz. It is also understood that the same method of physical departure from the Island by this group will be used, namely, the making of a raft in view of the plentiful supply of lumber that is allowed to lie about on the Island. Martin, one of the prisoners who attempted to escape, has stated that everybody on the Island "has it in" for the Warden, and that the men are bound to get him.

I have issued instructions to the Agent in Charge at the San Francisco Office of the FBI to forward by air mail photographs taken of the various physical aspects of this case in order that you may have these available for your examination.

Statements are also being taken from the guards on duty, as well as from the prisoners, though from the latter it is not believed that much information will be secured in view of the general practice of prisoners on the Island refusing to talk to any Government representative. Arrangements have been made today to check the laboratories for the discarded tools and instruments. Our Agents have already recovered eight hand-written notes from the toilets of Young and Stomphill, which upon preliminary examination show that these deal with a discussion of the details of the proposed escape. These notes are being dried and will be given thorough examination by our Laboratory for their contents.

I also instructed the Agent in Charge of our San Francisco Office last night to immediately advise Warden Johnson of the information which we have received to the effect that there are numerous knives in the possession of prisoners in the cells at Alcatraz, and also of the attitude of these prisoners toward him personally, as well as the details concerning the proposed break to be consummated by the kitchen crew, in order that the Warden might take such appropriate steps as he would deem necessary to avoid another attempted escape.

From a cursory examination of this preliminary report there of course stand out a few facts to which probably special attention should be given.

1. The desirability of instituting an inspection of the windows, bars, and cells on Alcatraz at frequent intervals. In this case it is to be noted that these bars had been sawed and the bar at the window loosened and were in this condition for over a month, but were not at any time ascertained by any of the prison guards. It would appear that there is therefore no actual inspection or examination made of these facilities at the prison, and it might be well to consider the desirability of a check of this kind being made at frequent intervals. It is recognized that this might incur some extra labor and effort, but that would seem to be inconsequential as compared with a wholesale break of dangerous felons from this institution.

2. Some steps should be taken to improve the mechanical devices, which are now used to locate metal objects, for if the reports are true from the prisoners on the Island, it would appear that many of them have various types of weapons secreted in their mattresses which are not found through the inspection now made. The same would of course apply to the so-called electric eye through which the prisoners pass from the work shops to the prison cells. It would appear that this instrument is not at the present time as sensitive as it should be for the purposes for which it has been devised. Likewise, it would seem that a very careful check should be made of prisoners working in various parts of the institution, such as in this case when Stanphill snuggled these arms and other articles into the isolation ward when he was working in that ward.

3. It would seem some steps should be taken to curtail the free accessibility to lumber which is now so easily available to the prisoners on the Island. It is to be noted that this lumber is available from

two sources; first, that which is washed up from the shore; and second, that which is allowed to lie about by the laborers now working on the Islands. It, of course, would be no doubt advanced by the Warden that the prisoners would not in the regular course of events be able to gain access to this lumber because it has always been assumed that prisoners could not escape from within the walls, but this attempted escape and the one some months ago definitely proves that prisoners can get from within the walls, and that being a fact, the facilities for making a raft or for being able to float safely away from Alcatraz upon some board or plank should certainly not be available.

4. Some change should be made in the supervision and guarding of the isolation ward. In this case it is to be noted that these five prisoners, in five separate cells, at various times of the day and night sawed the bars from their cell doors and then crossed a hallway at least sixteen feet from the cells to a window from which they loosened a bar and then cut through the framework of the window. The work that accomplished these results had extended over a period of many weeks, and yet no one noted these activities. It would thus appear that the supervision and guarding of the isolation ward are not as thorough or as vigorous as they should be, for if they had been properly supervised and guarded this could not have been accomplished.

5. It would appear that some immediate steps should be taken to check the situation in regard to the proposed break by the kitchen crew. This crew has been reported to have saws and knives in its possession, and these individuals propose to make a break of a more elaborate character than that which occurred yesterday morning, seizing women and children as hostages. While this might sound somewhat fantastic, it is a fact that similar rumors have occurred from time to time that such a plan was in consideration, and in view of the information obtained from Martin, one of the prisoners who attempted to escape yesterday morning, it would now appear that the plan has rather definite developments.

The Attorney General

- 7 -

1-14-39

As soon as I receive further details and a complete report upon the attempted escape of yesterday morning at Alcatraz, I will promptly submit them to you.

Respectfully

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

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JEH:HC

January 14, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR. JOSEPH B. KEENAN

I am transmitting herewith, for your information, a copy of a memorandum which I have just addressed to the Attorney General, giving a preliminary report of the attempted escape of five prisoners at Alcatraz yesterday morning.

Very truly yours

J. Edgar Hoover  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

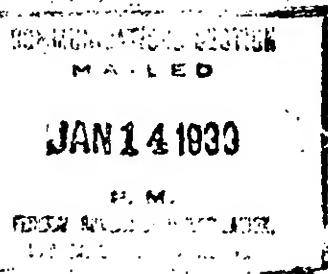
Inclosure

8 p.m.

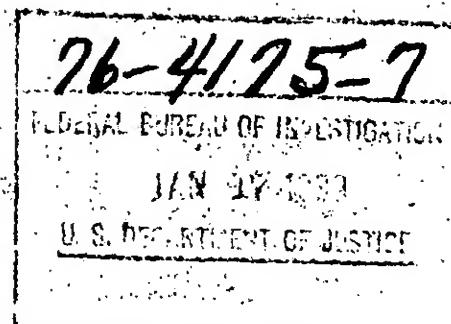
8

14 Jan 39

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nathan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. E. A. Tamm \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ercoll \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Felt \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Harbo \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Lester \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Melvin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Miss Gandy \_\_\_\_\_



RECORDED



JAN 14 1939

January 14, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

I thought you would be interested in the following preliminary report which I have telephonically received from the Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Office at San Francisco upon the attempted escape yesterday of five prisoners from Alcatraz.

1. Time element.— I shall first set forth the time elements appearing in this escape in order that you may be familiar with this aspect. There are three prison count checks during the night at Alcatraz. The first is at midnight, the second is at 3:00 a.m. and the third is at 6:00 a.m. The 3:00 a.m. count on the morning of January 13th was made and everybody was found accounted for. At approximately 3:35 a.m., January 13th, one man was missed from D cell block, which is the isolation ward, where the five men who attempted to escape were located. As soon as it was found that one man was missing, the prison guard immediately notified the prison administration as per instructions, not waiting to see if any more prisoners were missing. At 3:42 a.m. an actual count of the tier was made and it was then found that five men were missing, namely, Young, McCain, Barker, Martin and Staphill. These men all had individual cells adjoining each other. At 4:01 a.m. the general alarm whistle blew and the San Francisco Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was notified, as were the other law enforcement agencies in San Francisco. At 4:10 a.m. Barker and Staphill were sighted on the shore at Alcatraz and by 4:30 a.m. all of the remaining prisoners who attempted to escape were sighted. At 5:18 a.m. Barker entered the hospital at Alcatraz and at 5:21 a.m. Staphill was entered in the hospital at Alcatraz. At 5:30 all five of the prisoners had been returned to the prison and at 6:00 o'clock check the count showed all prisoners accounted for.

2. As to the condition of the cells from which the prisoners escaped.— Cells 524 through 531 each had two flat bar metal pieces cut, which permitted an aperture of about 10 to 12 inches. Cell 532 had two of the bars on the door cut, which permitted an aperture of 8 to 13 inches. The door bars are square and an examination showed that they had been sawed and filed smooth. The cuts were covered from time to time by paint mixed with floor wax, putty not being used as is generally the practice when such attempts are made. Each prisoner escaped through his own cell door and then crossed the corridor of

76-4175-7

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the cell block to the window on the outside wall, where a bar had been broken loose and an outside window with steel framing had been cut out. The escape to the outside was made through this window.

3. As to the tools used. - William Martin, one of the convicts who attempted to escape and who was saved from drowning by Deputy Marshal Miller, has made a statement to the effect that each of the five prisoners who attempted to escape had worked on the bars in his cell and the window when they had a chance, both at night and during the day. It has been ascertained that Barker planned the escape and that the escape was set for consummation for at least a month; that everything was ready and that the prisoners were only waiting for the right foggy night. All of the five prisoners had saw blades and after they had finished the sawing of the bars about a month ago, the blades were thrown into the lavatories on the Island so that any search of the cells or their persons would not disclose the blades. The heavy bar which is on the inside of the outside wall windows, and through which the prisoners escaped, is made of steel, which is supposed to resist any type of cutting. The prisoners could not cut the bar, but they pried it loose with an instrument they made, which is known as a screw-jack, which is about one-half inch in diameter and four inches long, with a bolt on the screw and a groove on the bolt. The use of this caused a tension which snapped the bar several times. The bar was then put back in place, and has been in the condition indicated for at least a month. The saw and the screw-jack used by the prisoners were smuggled into the isolation ward many weeks ago by Stanphill when he, Stanphill, was working in the cell house. After Stanphill smuggled this material into the isolation ward he, Stanphill, then committed a violation of the rules by having a knife in his regular cell, and as a result of this violation Stanphill was then placed in the isolation ward into which he had already smuggled the tools to be used in effecting the escape. The saw blades which each of the prisoners had, went through prison inspection in that they were glued into musical instruments believed to be mouth harps. The saw blades were made in the blacksmith shop. It has also been ascertained that copper will not show up on the mechanical devices for detection of metals, with the result that information has been received that there are a number of knives in the possession of prisoners in the cell house made of copper, which is obtainable in the machine shop at Alcatraz. Information received from the prisoners indicates that the mechanical devices used at Alcatraz to detect smuggled metal are practically useless since they are not sensitive enough to detect the saw blades and knives which are secreted in the mattresses by the prisoners.

4. As to the method of departure planned from the Island after the escape from within the prison walls. - The five prisoners had planned to get away on a raft. The Agents of the Bureau at San Francisco have recovered a rather crude raft which was being made by the five men at the edge of the water after their escape from within the walls. The lumber for this raft was easily obtainable, not only from the driftwood which is washed up upon the shores at Alcatraz, but also from lumber being used by civilian workmen in making certain improvements and repairs incident to the sewage and water supply on Alcatraz at the present time. This raft was tied together with sheets torn in strips and some of the planks were as thick as three inches. The actual location of the prisoners after they had escaped from within the walls was when they were endeavoring to obtain additional wood for the raft from the dock on the Island at Alcatraz. The men, when apprehended, were nude or just in shorts, their clothing being tied in bundles and tied onto the raft.

5. As to the details of the apprehension. - Barker and Stanphill were sighted first when they were on the shore of the Island at Alcatraz at a point approximately midway on the Golden Gate side. The Coast Guard launch and the Alcatraz launch were throwing lights on that side, and when the two prisoners were sighted they were ordered to halt, and when they did not stop they were fired upon with a .45 automatic and a Thompson Sub-machine gun. McCain and Young were apprehended without injury about one-third of the way from the south tip of the Island, on the side toward San Francisco. They were apprehended at the side of the raft. Martin was pulled out of the water at a point very near to the point of the Island which is nearest to San Francisco.

6. As to the condition of the prisoners. - Barker died last evening. Barker's left femur was broken by a bullet which entered the thigh about the middle of the outer surface and emerged a little lower on the inner surface of the thigh. Another bullet entered the neck in the back below the right ear, and appears to have emerged from the inner angle of the right eye. Stanphill has one wound on the outer part of the upper thigh; another a little lower down on the internal surface of the thigh; and a third lower down on the outer and inner surfaces of the right leg above the ankle.

When Barker was apprehended, he exclaimed to one of the guards: "I am crazy as hell - I should never have tried it."

The Attorney General

- 4 -

1-16-39

From information received it would appear that a similar break has been planned by the prisoners who are detailed to the kitchen. It is stated that these prisoners have plans similar to those used by the five who have already attempted to escape, and that the kitchen crew has planned to work on a more elaborate scale and escape, seizing some of the women and children who are members of the families of the guards and employees living on Alcatraz. It is also understood that the same method of physical departure from the Island by this group will be used, namely, the making of a raft in view of the plentiful supply of lumber that is allowed to lie about on the Island. Martin, one of the prisoners who attempted to escape, has stated that everybody on the Island "has it in" for the Warden, and that the men are bound to get him.

I have issued instructions to the Agent in Charge at the San Francisco Office of the FBI to forward by air mail photographs taken of the various physical aspects of this case in order that you may have these available for your examination.

Statements are also being taken from the guards on duty, as well as from the prisoners, though from the latter it is not believed that much information will be secured in view of the general practice of prisoners on the Island refusing to talk to any Government representative. Arrangements have been made today to check the laboratories for the discarded tools and instruments. Our Agents have already recovered eight hand-written notes from the toilets of Young and Stanphill, which upon preliminary examination show that these deal with a discussion of the details of the proposed escape. These notes are being dried and will be given thorough examination by our Laboratory for their contents.

I also instructed the Agent in Charge of our San Francisco Office last night to immediately advise Warden Johnson of the information which we have received to the effect that there are numerous knives in the possession of prisoners in the cells at Alcatraz, and also of the attitude of these prisoners toward him personally, as well as the details concerning the proposed break to be consummated by the kitchen crew, in order that the Warden might take such appropriate steps as he would deem necessary to avoid another attempted escape.

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From a cursory examination of this preliminary report there of course stand out a few facts to which probably special attention should be given.

1. The desirability of initiating an inspection of the windows, bars, and cells on Alcatraz at frequent intervals. In this case it is to be noted that these bars had been sawed and the bar at the window loosened and were in this condition for over a month, but were not at any time ascertained by any of the prison guards. It would appear that there is therefore no actual inspection or examination made of these facilities at the prison, and it might be well to consider the desirability of a check of this kind being made at frequent intervals. It is recognized that this might incur some extra labor and effort, but that would seem to be inconsequential as compared with a wholesale break of dangerous felons from this institution.

2. Some steps should be taken to improve the mechanical devices, which are now used to locate metal objects, for if the reports are true from the prisoners on the Island, it would appear that many of them have various types of weapons secreted in their mattresses which are not found through the inspection now made. The same would of course apply to the so-called electric eye through which the prisoners pass from the work shops to the prison cells. It would appear that this instrument is not at the present time as sensitive as it should be for the purposes for which it has been devised. Likewise, it would seem that a very careful check should be made of prisoners working in various parts of the institution, such as in this case when Stamphill snuggled these and other articles into the isolation ward when he was working in that ward.

3. It would seem some steps should be taken to curtail the free accessibility to lumber which is now so easily available to the prisoners on the Island. It is to be noted that this lumber is available from

two sources; first, that which is washed up from the shore; and second, that which is allowed to lie about by the laborers now working on the Island. It, of course, would be no doubt advanced by the Warden that the prisoners would not in the regular course of events be able to gain access to this lumber because it has always been assumed that prisoners could not escape from within the walls, but this attempted escape and the one some months ago definitely proves that prisoners can get from within the walls, and that being a fact, the facilities for making a raft or for being able to float safely away from Alcatraz upon some board or plank should certainly not be available.

4. Some change should be made in the supervision and guarding of the isolation ward. In this case it is to be noted that these five prisoners, in five separate cells, at various times of the day and night sawed the bars from their cell doors and then crossed a hallway at least sixteen feet from the cells to a window from which they loosened a bar and then cut through the framework of the window. The work that accomplished these results had extended over a period of many weeks, and yet no one noted these activities. It would thus appear that the supervision and guarding of the isolation ward are not as thorough or as vigorous as they should be, for if they had been properly supervised and guarded this could not have been accomplished.

5. It would appear that some immediate steps should be taken to check the situation in regard to the proposed break by the kitchen crew. This crew has been reported to have saws and knives in its possession, and these individuals propose to make a break of a more elaborate character than that which occurred yesterday morning, seizing women and children as hostages. While this might sound somewhat fantastic, it is a fact that similar rumors have occurred from time to time that such a plan was in consideration, and in view of the information obtained from Martin, one of the prisoners who attempted to escape yesterday morning, it would now appear that the plan has rather definite developments.

The Attorney General

- 7 -

1-14-39

As soon as I receive further details and a complete report upon the attempted escape of yesterday morning at Alcatraz, I will promptly submit them to you.

Respectfully

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

JEB:HCB

January 14, 1939

RECORDED & INDEXED

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

76-4175-8

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Supplementing my first memorandum of the 16th instant, setting forth the first telephonic report received upon the attempted escape from Alcatraz, I have received the following information this afternoon from my Agent in Charge at San Francisco.

During the course of the investigation it has been developed that

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b7d  
[REDACTED] has informed our Agents that this particular block is a very bad spot and that some weeks ago he made a report on the situation, setting out the fact that he could not see the guard on the gun gallery and that the man on the gun gallery could not see him, and that these particular cells were not visible to the man who is supposed to see them from the gun gallery. If this be true, this may explain to some extent the reason why the prisoners who attempted to make the escape were able to carry on the sawing of the bars in the window successfully without being noted by the guards.

There is another aspect to the situation at Alcatraz which has been incidentally ascertained during the course of our investigation. We have not gone into this particular aspect because it would seem to be an administrative one rather than one which should be investigated by this Bureau unless it is your special desire that we go into it. It appears that the Deputy Warden, Mr. Miller, at Alcatraz, is a rather hard-boiled prison official who has difficulty in getting along with his subordinates. From information received, it would appear that Mr. Miller merely tells the Warden about what he wants to tell him, and limits his information usually to merely answering questions put to him by the Warden rather than in an open degree of frankness which should exist between a Warden and a Deputy Warden. It is understood that the guards employed in the prison have from time to time made reports on things and conditions which have seemed wrong to them, and when such a report was made to Mr. Miller he has often taken it as a personal criticism instead of something constructive, with the result that some of the men in subordinate positions on the Island now no longer make such reports as they consider it to be inexpedient to do so. This has naturally resulted in a rather bad morale.

JAN 14 1939

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The Attorney General

- 3 -

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[redacted] has also indicated that the situation in the isolation section of the prison is far from desirable. The D cell block used for the isolation purposes is viewed as a place by many of the prisoners where they would like to be incarcerated. They have the best ventilation in these cells; they have reading materials; and they are the best cells on the Island. It has also been stated that the administrative officers at Alcatraz appear to bargain with the prisoners, allowing them to be in whatever cell they desire, or next to someone they want to be next to, just as long as the prisoners behave. [redacted] has indicated that the discipline is very low and that when a guard in the cell block tries to discipline a prisoner by reporting the prisoner to the Warden, the guard is not backed up, with the result that the guard, upon returning to the cell, is frequently laughed at by the prisoners.

In regard to the reported situation of the prison kitchen crew, it is understood that the prison officials last night made a thorough search of the kitchen, but found nothing of value there. They did, however, find a meter box saw in the print shop, and also a putty knife which had been sharpened to a saw blade in the same shop. Both of these articles had been concealed in the print shop.

I requested my Agent in Charge to express his personal opinion to me as to what he thought of the general situation at Alcatraz today, and he stated that from what he had been able to gather, he does not believe that anyone connected with the prison administration at Alcatraz has been corrupt, but that it seems to be a question of persons in administrative positions on the Island failing to handle properly their jobs, with the resultant breakdown in the morale.

I shall, of course, promptly advise you of such further information as I receive concerning this matter.

Respectfully

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

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JEW & ECB

January 14, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT TO THE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR. JOSEPH B. KEENAN

Supplementing my previous memorandum to you today, I am attaching hereto an additional memorandum addressed to the Attorney General, setting forth additional facts in connection with the attempted escape of five prisoners at Alcatraz yesterday.

Very truly yours

J. Edgar Hoover

*John Edgar Hoover  
Director*

**Inclosure**

Mr. Tolson \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Ethan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. C. A. \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Clegg \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Coffey \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Gandy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Egan \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Fowles \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Glavin \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Harbo \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Lester \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. McIntire \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Nichols \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_  
Mr. Tracy \_\_\_\_\_

13

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION  
MAILED  
JAN 14 1939  
P. M.  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION,  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

76-4175-9  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
JAN 18 1939  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

32

JLE:RCB

January 14, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Supplementing my first memorandum of the ~~16th instant~~ ~~OF INVESTIGATION~~ setting forth the first telephonic report received upon the attempted escape from Alcatraz, I have received the ~~16th instant~~ ~~of 1939~~ information this afternoon from my Agent in Charge at San Francisco.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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b7d

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b7C  
b7D

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I requested my Agent in Charge to express his personal opinion to me as to what he thought of the general situation at Alcatraz today, and he stated that from what he had been able to gather, he does not believe that anyone connected with the prison administration at Alcatraz has been corrupt, but that it seems to be a question of persons in administrative positions on the Island failing to handle properly their jobs, with the resultant breakdown in the morale.

I shall, of course, promptly advise you of such further information as I receive concerning this matter.

Respectfully

J. Edgar Hoover

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

JAN 15 1939

POSTAL

✓  
Mr. Tolson .....  
Mr. Nathan .....  
F. A. Tamm .....  
Mr. Coffey .....  
Mr. Crowl .....  
Mr. Dawson .....  
Mr. Egan .....  
Mr. Foxworth .....  
Mr. Glavin .....  
Mr. Marks .....  
Mr. Lester .....  
Mr. McIntire .....  
Mr. Nichols .....  
Mr. Quinn Tamm .....  
Mr. Tracy .....  
Miss Gandy .....  
FUG. SUP.

M

W1 23 GOVT COLLECT VIA MRT

F SANFRANCISCO CALIF 14 1045P

DIRECTOR

FBI JUSTICE WASHN DC

ALCATRAZ ATTEMPTED ESCAPE PHOTOGRAPHS FORWARDED AIR EXPRESS  
LEAVING SANFRANCISCO NINE THIRTY TONIGHT ARRIVE WASHINGTON  
SEVEN FORTY FIVE PM TOMORROW WEATHER CONDITIONS PERMITTING  
PIEPER..

Set me have these  
immediately upon  
arrival.

X.

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76-4175-10

|                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION |      |
| JAN 18 1939                     |      |
| U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE     |      |
| TOLSON                          | SAMM |
| FUG. SUP.                       |      |

BIR 1

**Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
San Francisco, California  
January 14, 1939**

Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, D. C.

Personal Attention  
Airmail Special Delivery

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Mr. Tolson     | ..... |
| Mr. Nathan     | ..... |
| Mr. E. A. Tamm | ..... |
| Mr. Cleve      | ..... |
| Mr. Coffey     | ..... |
| Mr. Cowl       | ..... |
| Mr. Econ       | ..... |
| Mr. Foxworth   | ..... |
| Mr. Glavin     | ..... |
| Mr. Barbo      | ..... |
| Mr. Lester     | ..... |
| Mr. McIntire   | ..... |
| Mr. Nichols    | ..... |
| Mr. Quinn Tamm | ....  |
| Mr. Tracy      | ..... |
| Miss Gandy     | ..... |

Re: Alcatraz Attempted Escape  
January 13, 1939

Dear Sir:

I am enclosing herewith an album prepared of photographs taken by us in order that you might have a good idea of the physical setup and the points of importance in the attempted escape from Alcatraz Island of convicts Arthur (Doc) Barker, No. 268; Dele Stamp-hill, No. 435; Rufus McCain, No. 267, Henry Young, No. 244, and William Martin, No. 370, in the early morning of January 13, 1939. We endeavor to portray photographically for you the important points showing where they effected their escape from the cells and the cell house; how they probably got down to the water where they were apprehended, and closeups of the raft, clothing bundles, and portions of the cells and window which had been cut and removed.

I am also enclosing herewith a map of that portion of Alcatraz Island which is pertinent in this inquiry which is marked showing certain points which will also assist in clarifying the picture. There is enclosed, too, a drawing showing a portion of the cell house, pointing out particularly that section of D cell block where it will be noted that the cells of the escaped prisoners are marked as well as the window of escape. It was thought that this would help you to visualize the problem of observation by guards of the particular portion of this block where these men were celled.

These photographs that are being forwarded are the only prints that were made, and I am enclosing herewith the negatives of all photographs taken by us and it is requested that two com-

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216 SEP 9

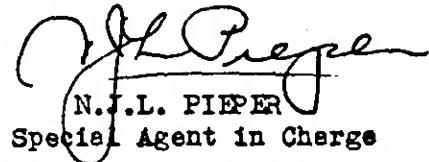
RECORDED & INDEXED  
I have taken album; map of  
Alcatraz & drawing of cell blocks  
to a.g. *John F. [Signature]*  
ENCLOSURE BEHIND FILE  
ENCLOSURE ATTACHED

Director re Alcatraz  
Attempted Escape  
January 13, 1939

January 14, 1939  
Page 2.

plete sets be printed and returned to us, one for transmittal to the prison authorities at Alcatraz. All of the photographs were not used in the album, but it is requested that we be furnished two complete sets.

Very truly yours,

  
N.J.L. PIEPER  
Special Agent in Charge

NJLP:MR  
Encls. 4

Do so at once. Making 4 sets instead  
of 2 & sending all by air mail  
to D. J. instructing them to make  
up 2 sets for us with charts as  
in set sent us & returning them to  
us by air mail.

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37

RECORDED

EAT:DM

76-4175-11

January 16, 1939

AIR MAIL  
SPECIAL DELIVERY

Special Agent in Charge  
Los Angeles, California

RE: ALCATRAZ ATTEMPTED ESCAPE  
January 13, 1939

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to the request contained in your letter of January 14, 1939, I am transmitting herewith four complete sets of the photographs taken at Alcatraz Penitentiary of various points of interest in connection with the attempted escape of Arthur Barker, et al. It is desired that you immediately make up two sets of these photographs with charts similar to those transmitted to me with your letter of January 14, 1939, returning these two complete sets with the accompanying charts to the Bureau by air mail.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

Mr. Tolson .....  
Mr. Nathan .....  
Mr. E. A. Tamm .....  
Mr. Clegg .....  
Mr. Coffey .....  
Mr. Crowley .....  
Mr. Egan .....  
Mr. Forrester .....  
Mr. Glevin .....  
Mr. Harbo .....  
Mr. Lester .....  
Mr. McIntire .....  
Mr. Nichols .....  
Mr. Quinn Tamm .....  
Mr. Tracy .....  
Miss Gandy .....  
  
Enclosures

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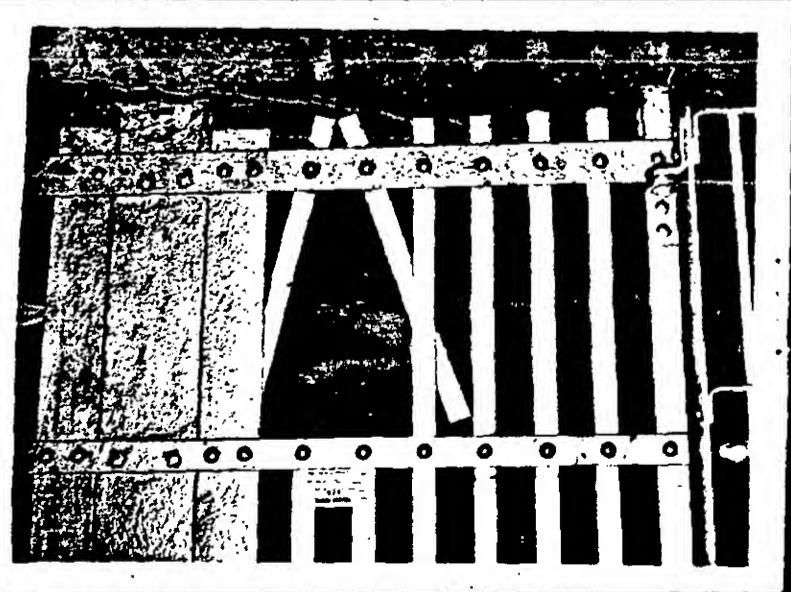
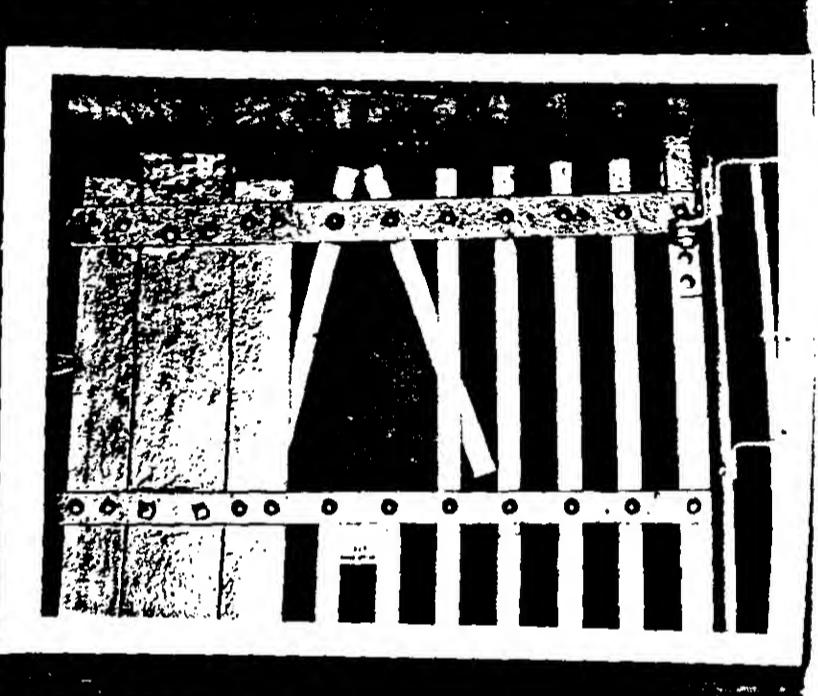
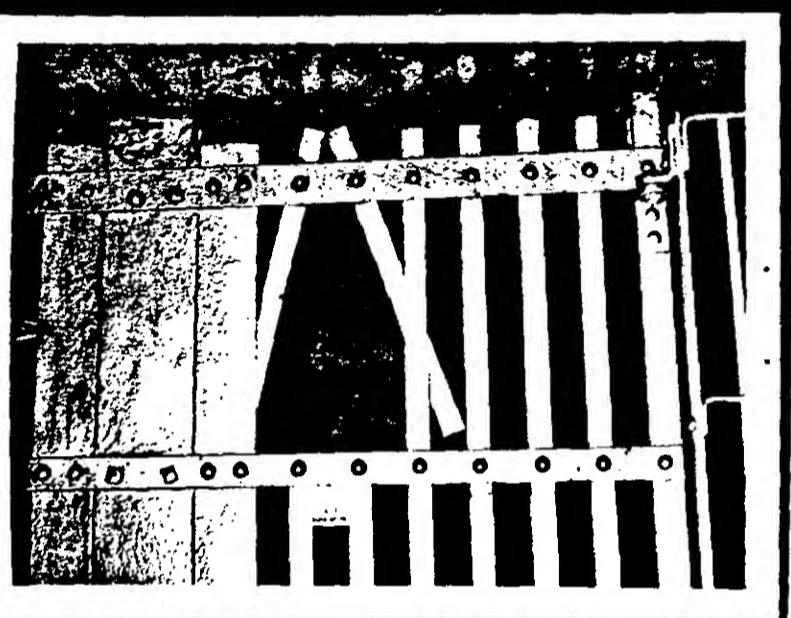
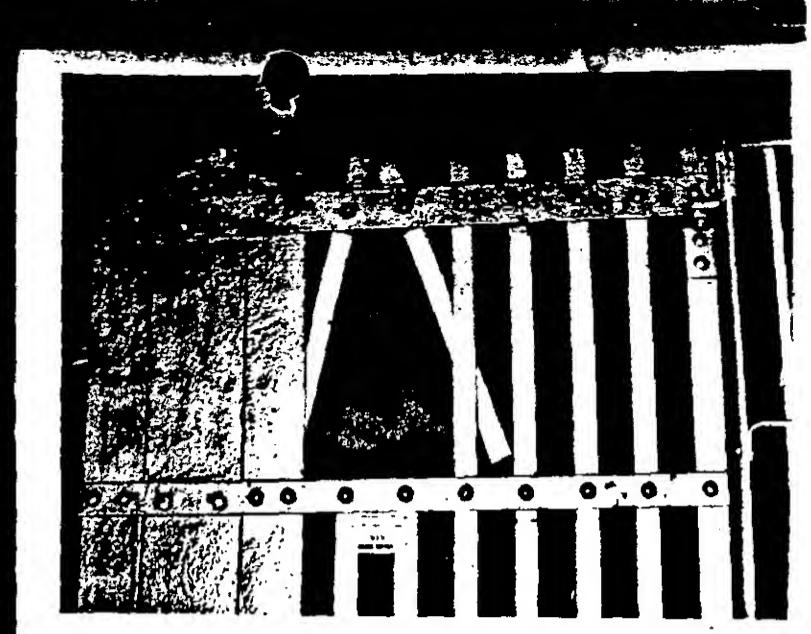
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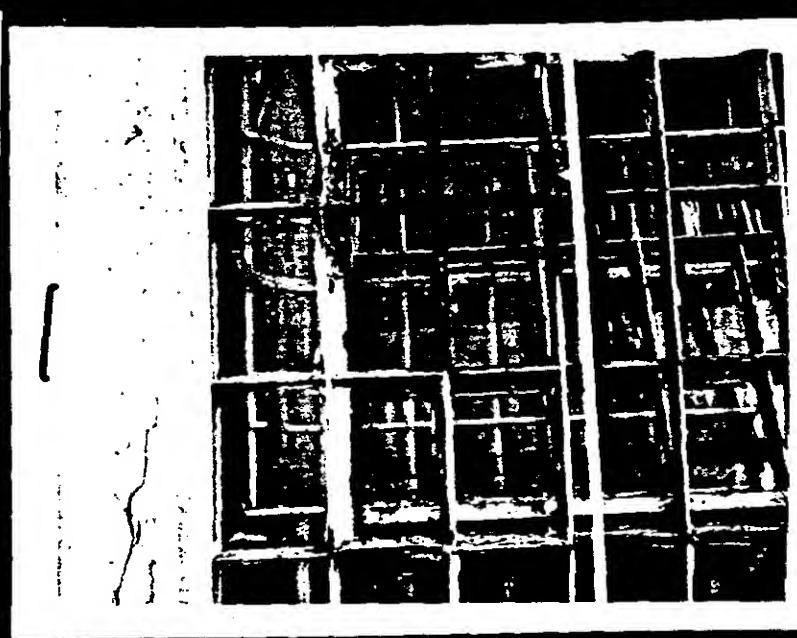
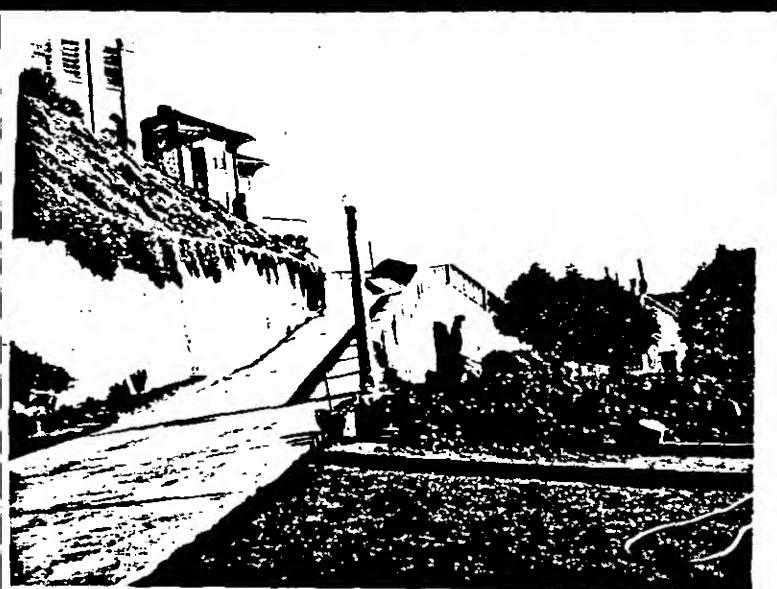
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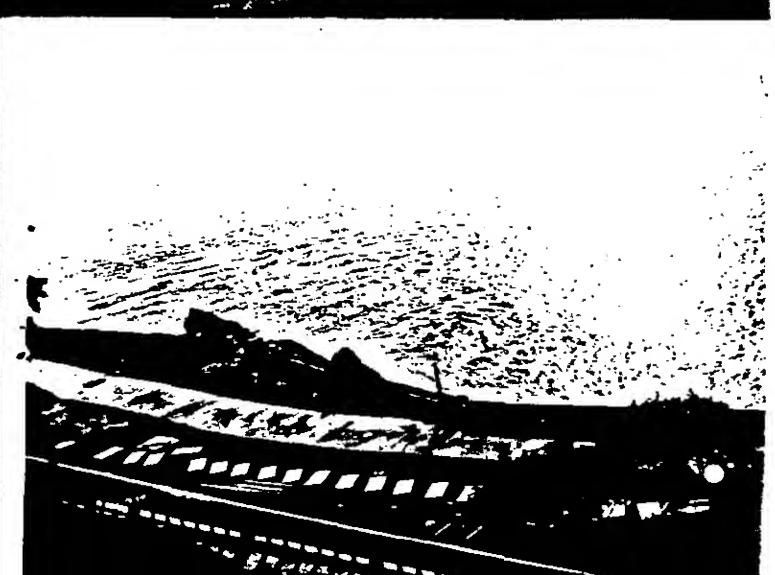
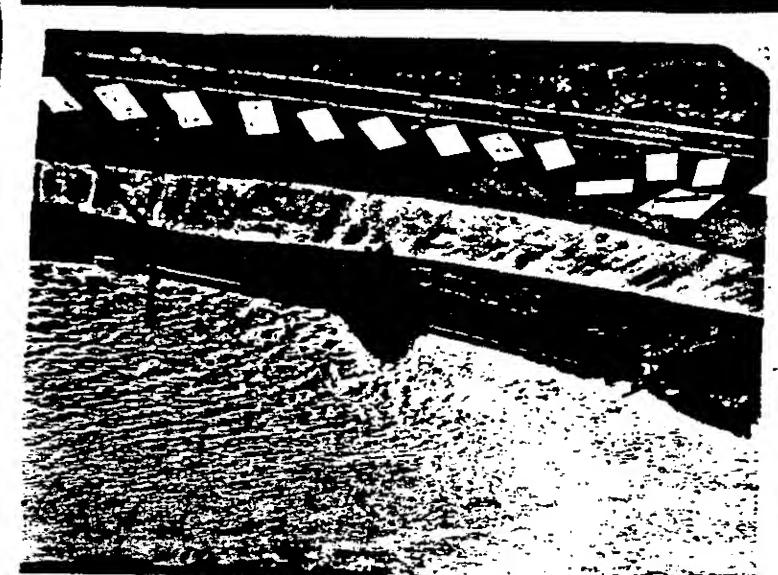
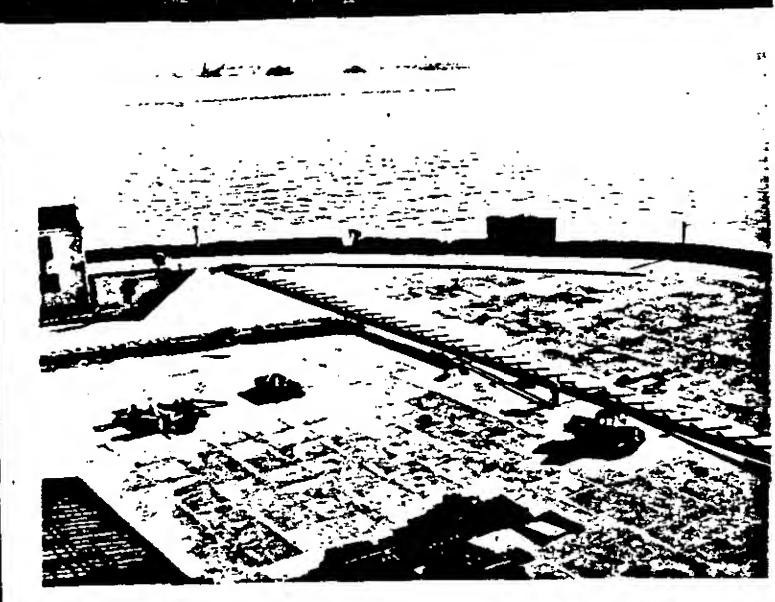
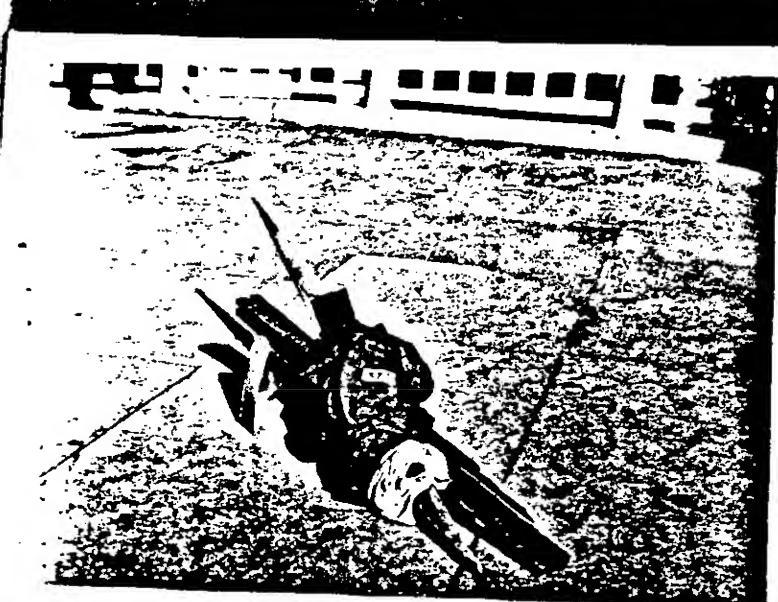
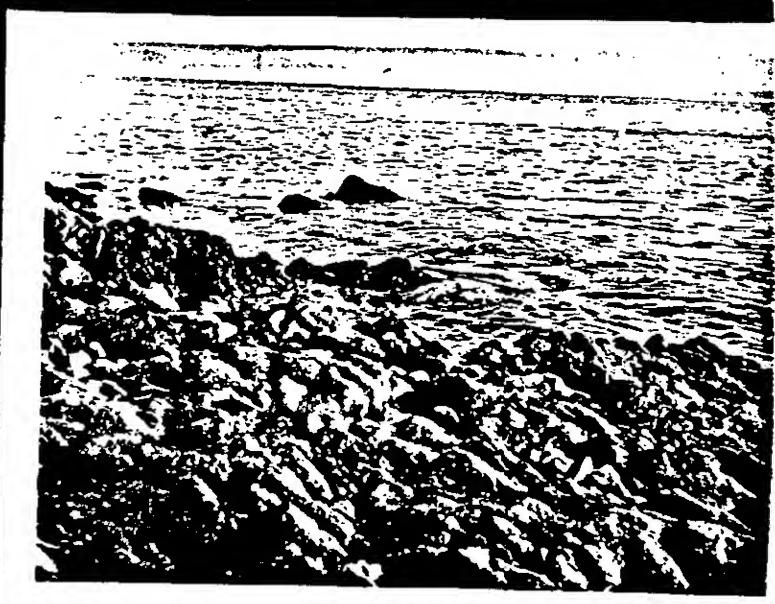
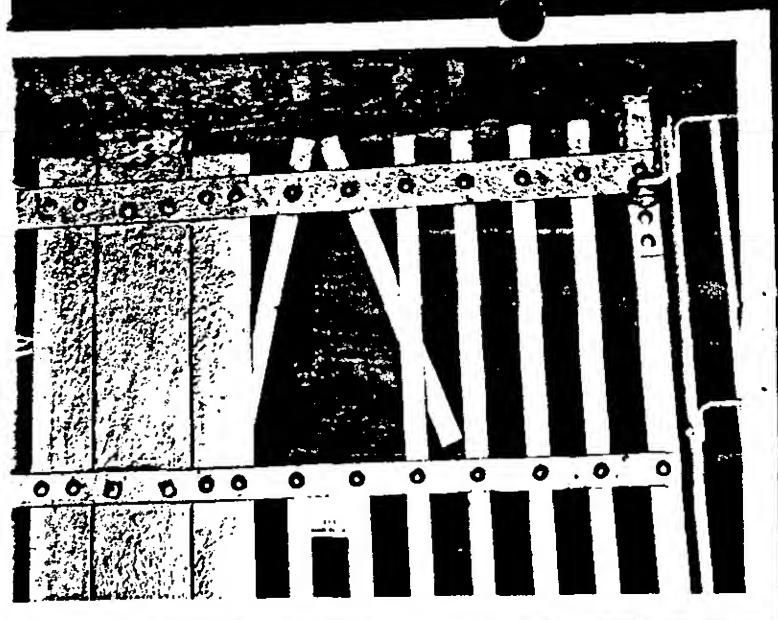
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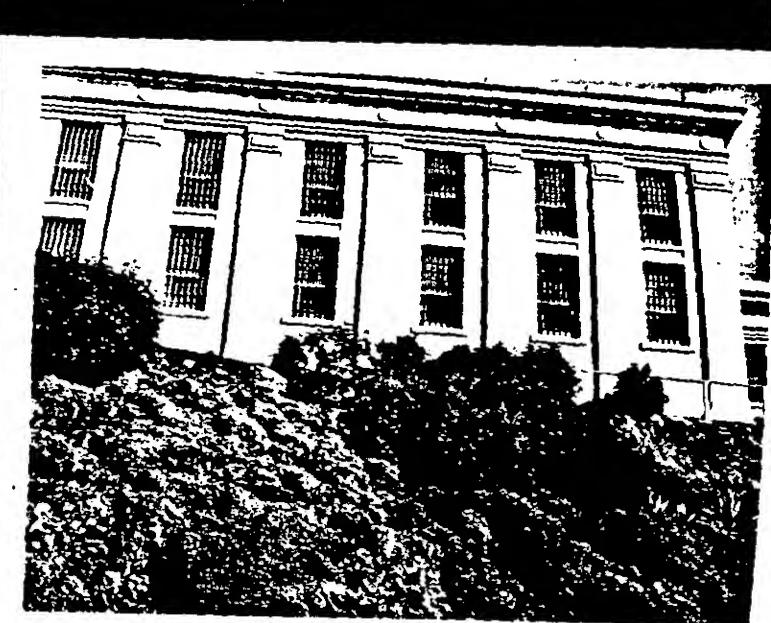
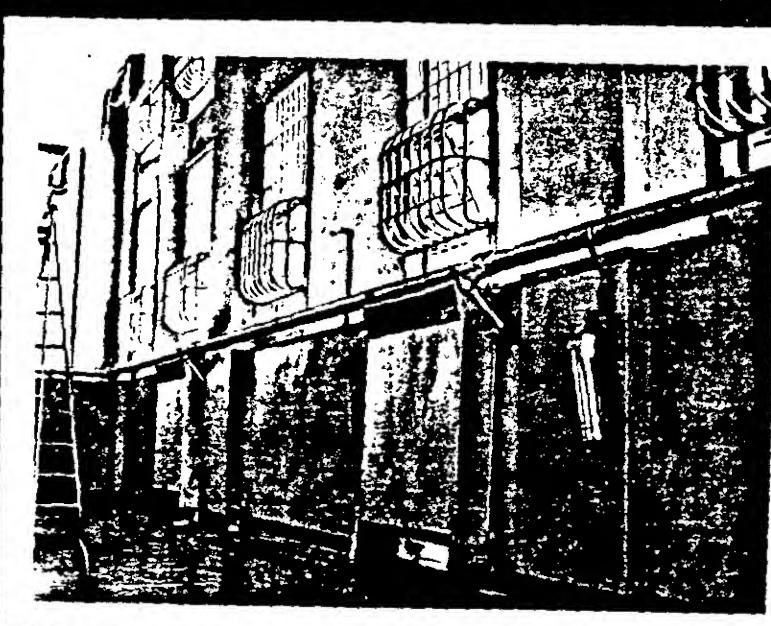
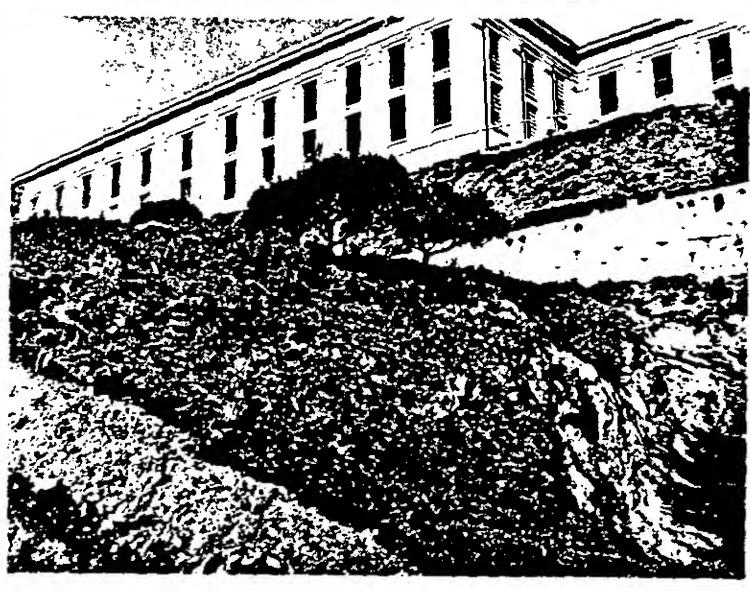
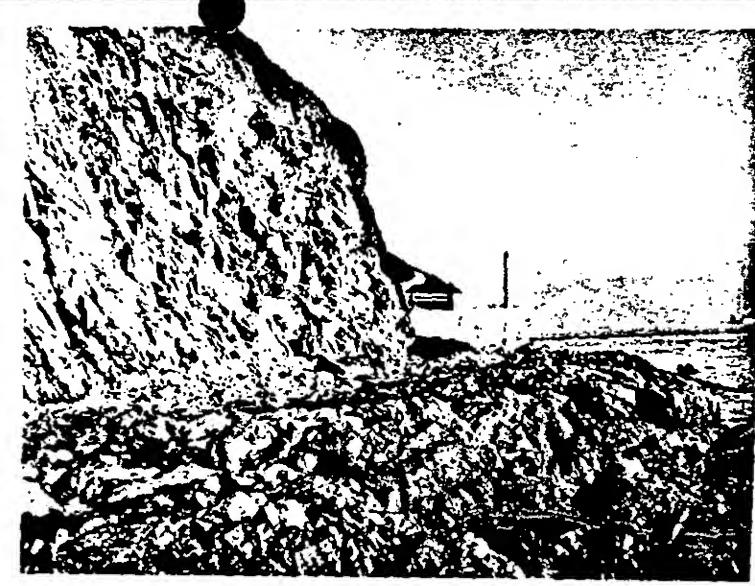
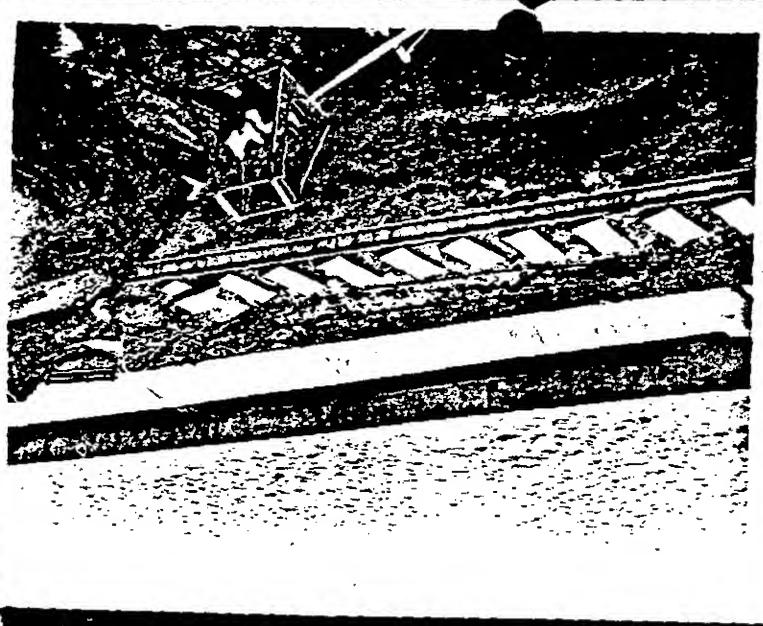
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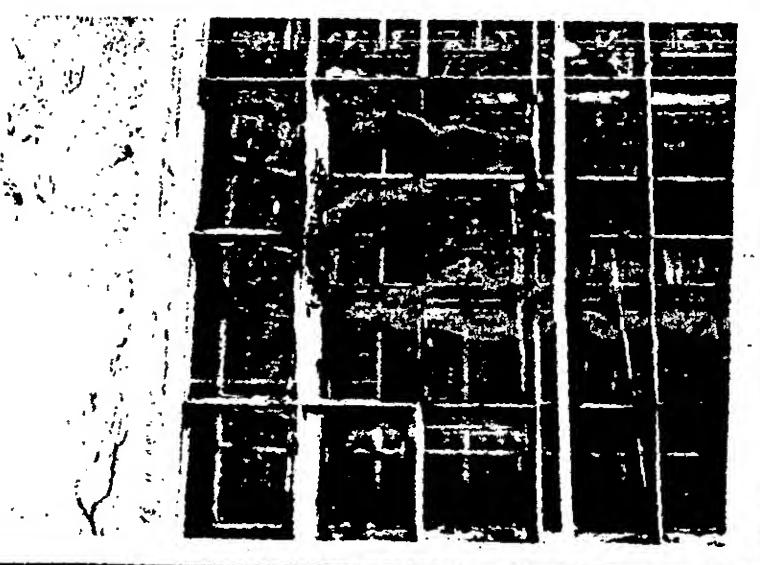
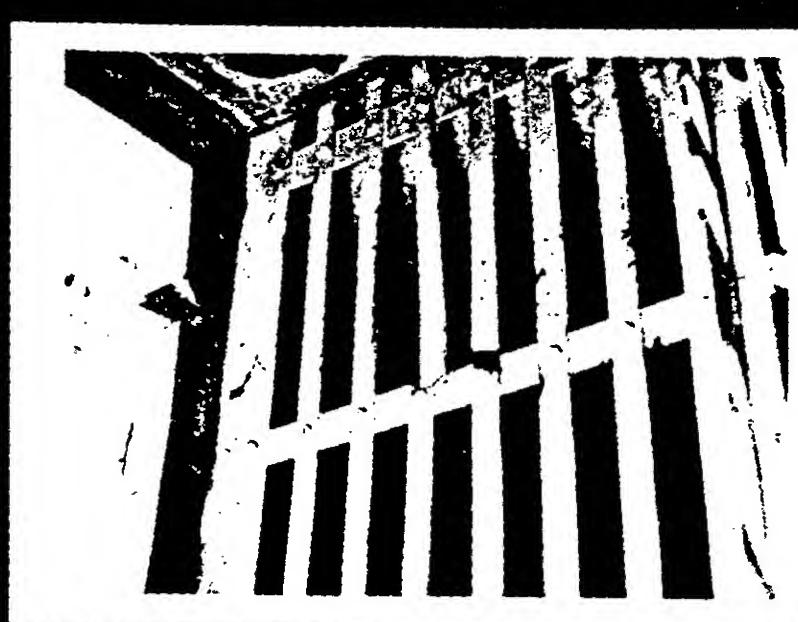
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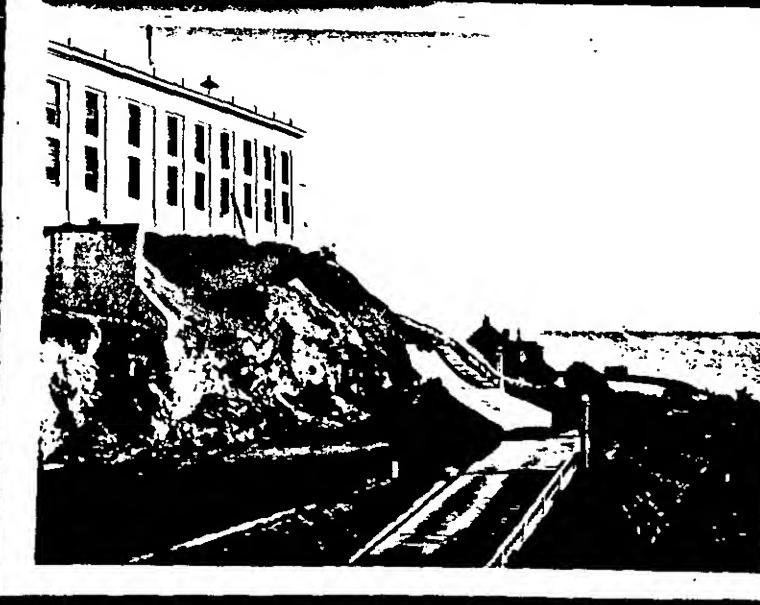
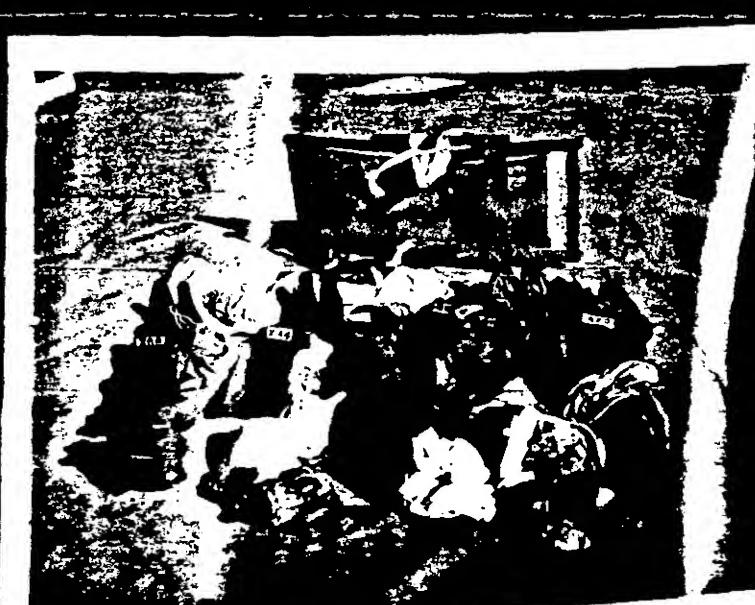
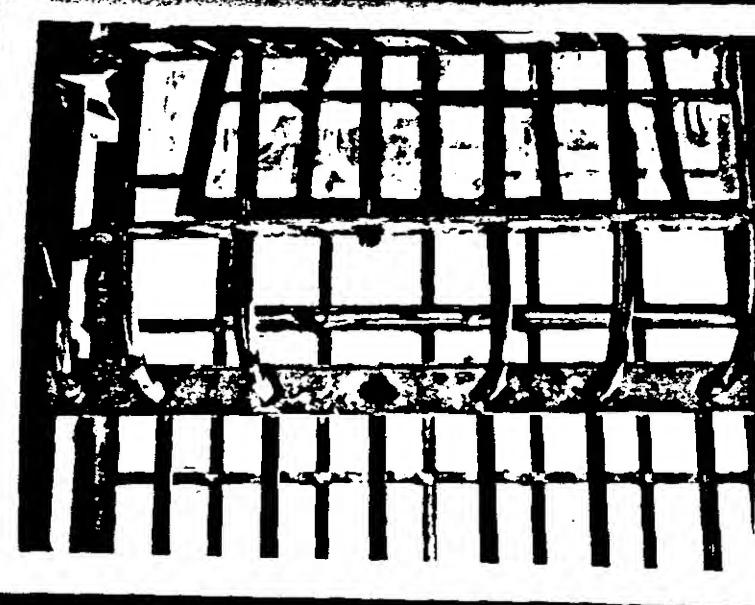
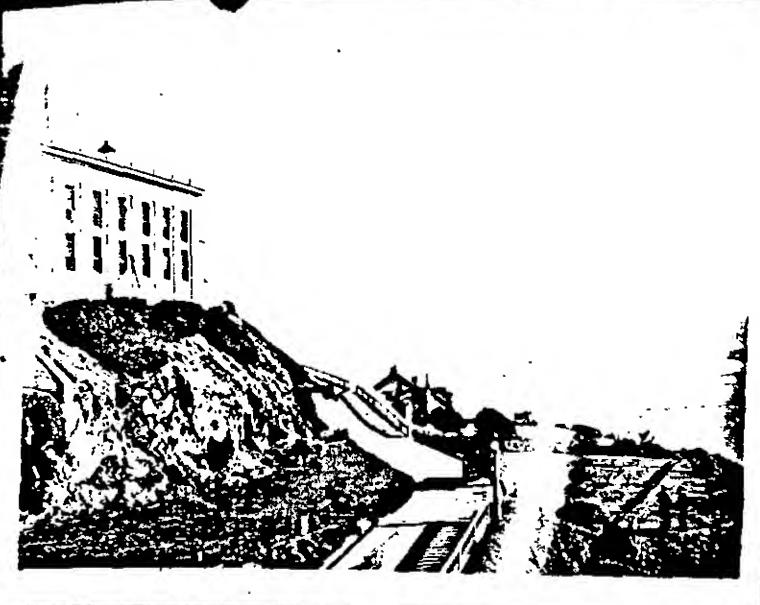
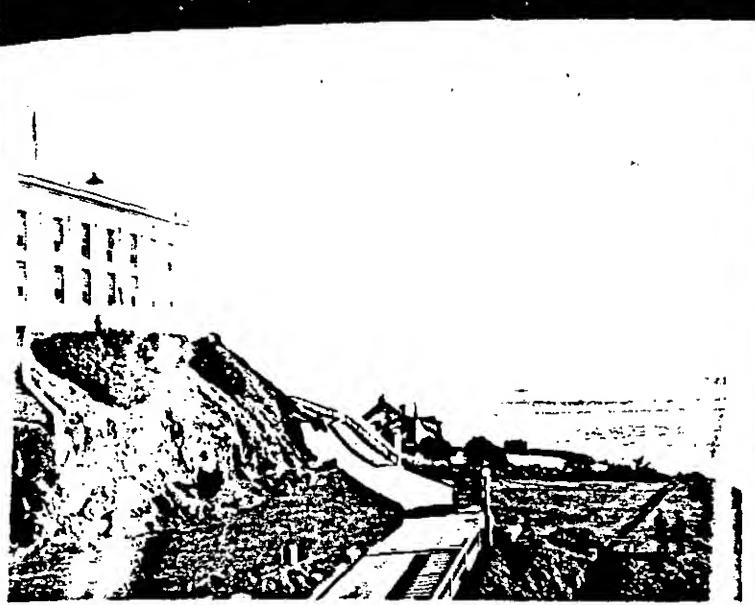


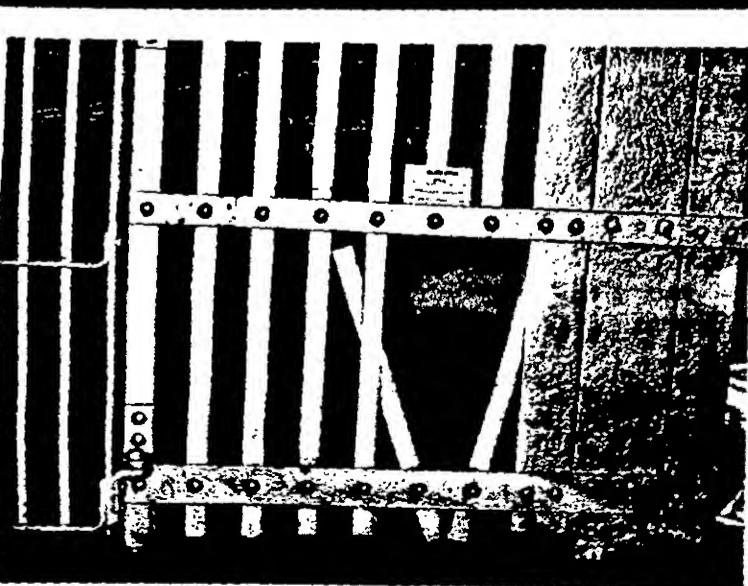
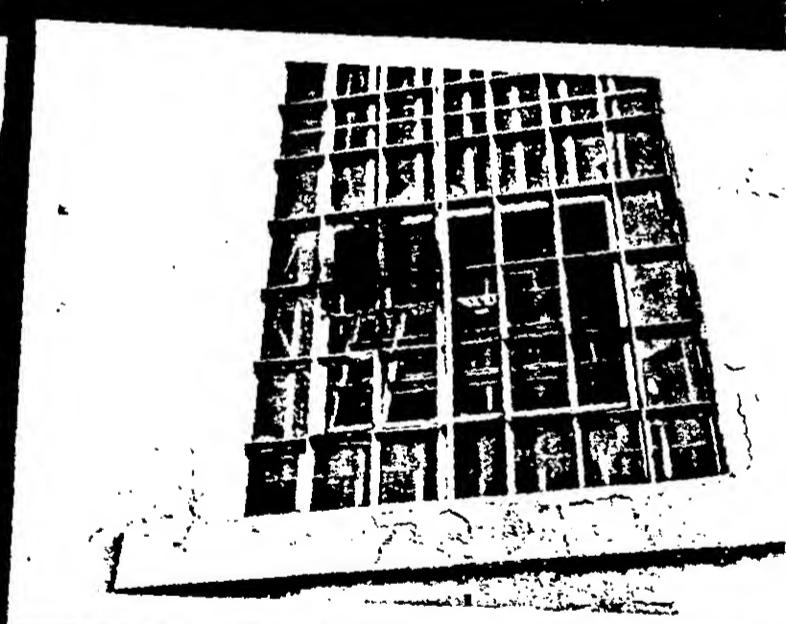
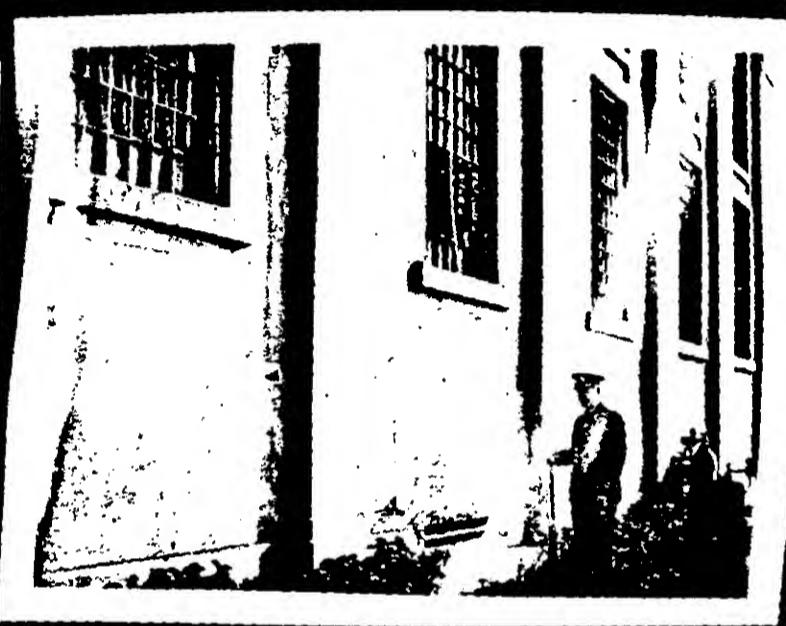
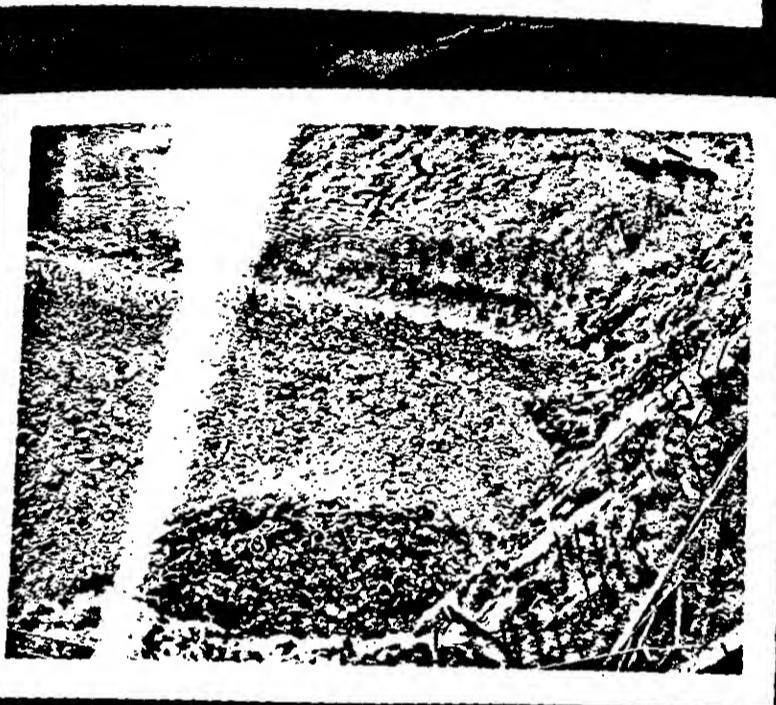
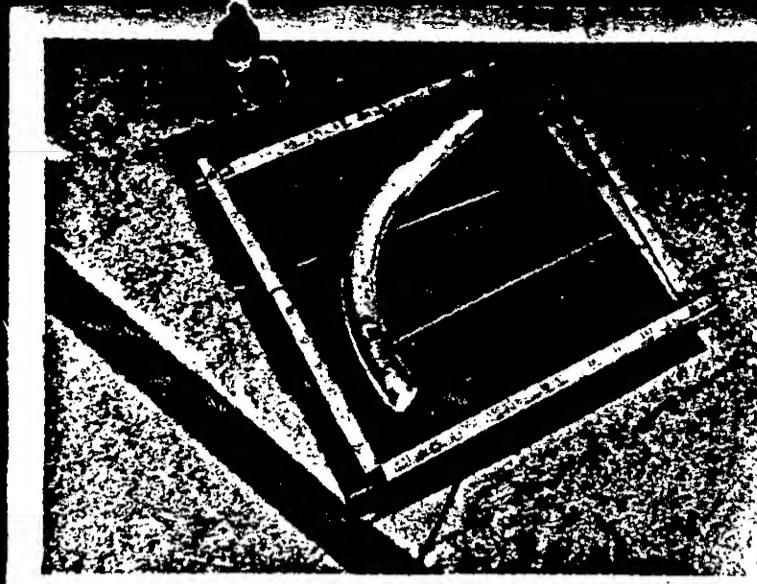
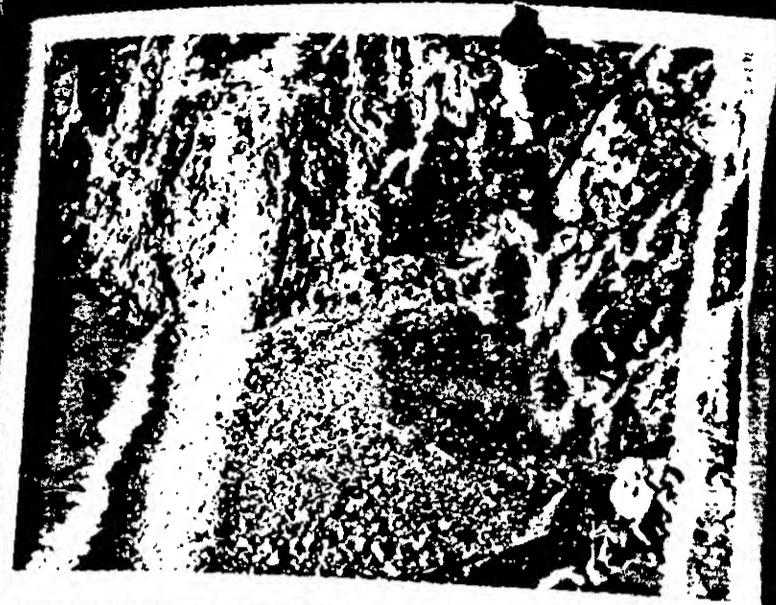


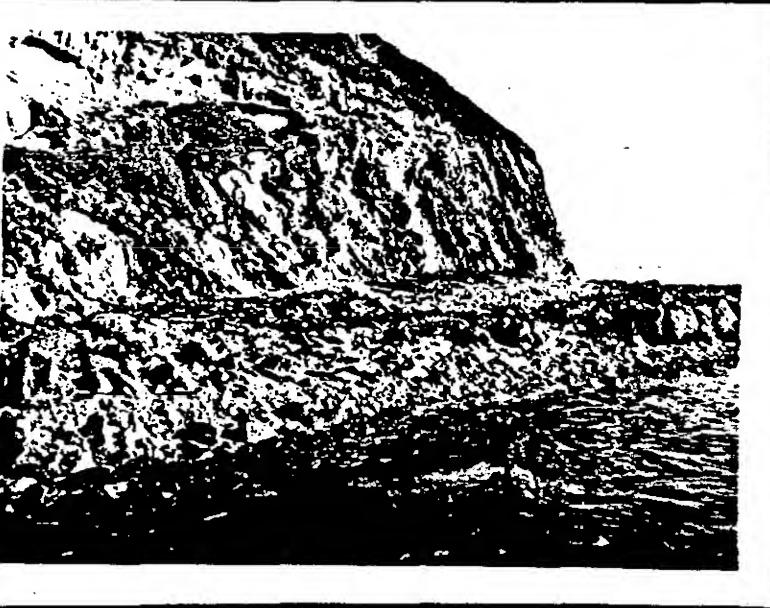
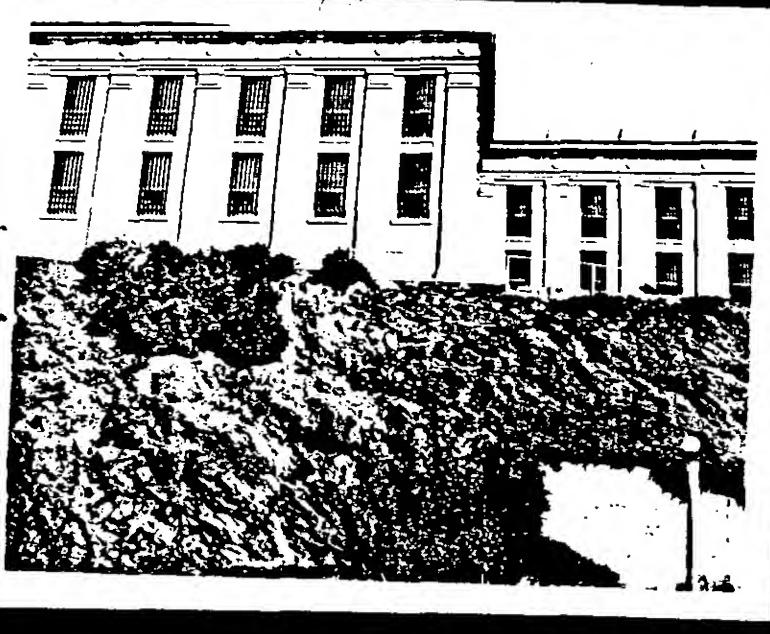
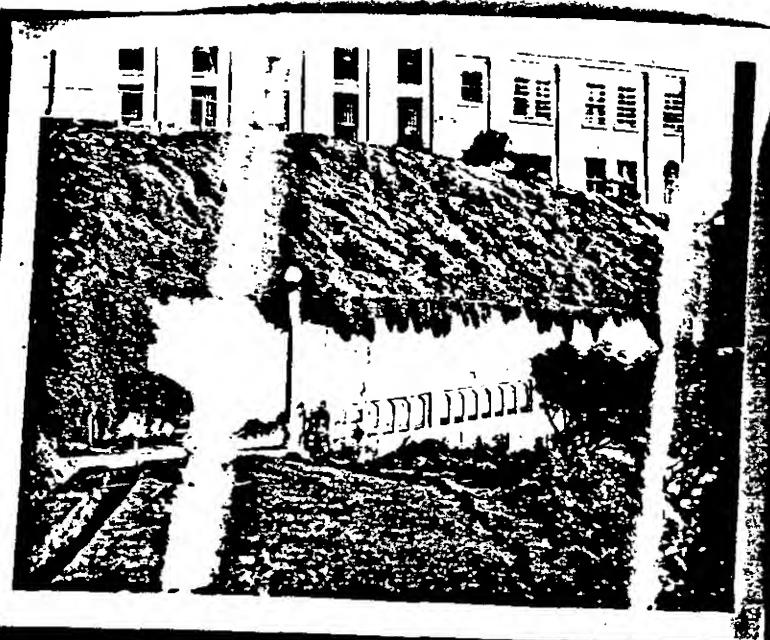












Federal Bureau of Investigation  
United States Department of Justice  
San Francisco, California  
January 16, 1939

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. John Edgar Hoover  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Washington, D. C.

Mr. Tolson .....  
Mr. Nathan .....  
Mr. E. A. Tamm .....  
Mr. Clerk .....  
Mr. Coffey .....  
Mr. Crowl .....  
Mr. Egan .....  
Mr. Foxworth .....  
Mr. Glavin .....  
Mr. Harbo .....  
Mr. Lester .....  
Mr. McIntire .....  
Mr. Nichols .....  
Mr. Quinn Tamm .....  
Mr. Tracy .....  
Miss Gandy .....

Re: CONDITIONS AT ALCATRAZ.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

In view of the fact that copies of the report of the attempted escape of ARTHUR (DOC) BARKER, #268; DALE STAMPHILL, #435; RUFUS McCAIN, #267; HENRY YOUNG, #244; and WILLIAM MARTIN, #370, from Alcatraz on January 13, 1939, will be sent to the U. S. Attorney here, it has been deemed advisable to limit the contents of that report to the essentials necessary in such types of cases. However, in view of the matters that came to our attention during the investigation which reflect possible reasons for the escape and weaknesses which, if not corrected, might be the cause of future escapes, it was thought that the data in this letter would be of importance for your personal consideration.

We have not interrogated persons in charge of details in order to obtain confirmation of these conditions, because this would appear to be an administrative investigation. This will not be done, unless specific instructions are given. I want to point out also that we have not been able to verify all these accusations, that some of the complainants probably have an individual axe to grind, but I thought that the subject matter is of enough importance to be considered by you. I also want to call to your attention the fact that these matters were developed by us in talking to the men, who voluntarily expressed themselves on these matters and stated to us that their loyalties were with the Director of the Bureau of Prisons, that they felt that the Bureau of Prisons program was as it should be, but that they just had to tell somebody of these situations, because they felt that there was a breakdown in the system at Alcatraz to such an extent that it would probably effect the entire system of the Bureau of Prisons. These men seemed sincere, and [redacted] expressed the belief that they probably would lose their jobs if their confidence were broken.

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MORALE AT ALCATRAZ ISLAND

76-475-11X

It has been my personal observation that [redacted] WASHINGTON

RECORDED & INDEXED

FEB 11 1939

Copies sent to A. G. & Keenan

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Commander Piper acts at [redacted] in the excellent manner in which they handled inquiry 48  
[redacted] based reports.

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E. J. MILLER, is in the presence of the Warden, he is not given an opportunity to express his views but answers only the questions that are put to him by Warden JOHNSTON. I was in conversation with Deputy Warden MILLER concerning this recent break, at which time he was giving me a great many details, and a few minutes thereafter we both went in to see the Warden, and it was obvious to me that he was just giving information to the Warden in answer to those questions put to him and that he hesitated in volunteering any general statements regarding the matter. It is rumor that has been picked up by the Agents going to Alcatraz that the Deputy Warden must get the Warden's authority to do everything and is not permitted to exercise any initiative of his own. We have noted that there is an attitude on the part of some of the men subordinate to the Deputy Warden which indicates their lack of confidence and respect for him in view of the fact that they have come and told us that they do not think he is the proper man for the job, that he shows preferences, that he has an uncontrollable temper and that he uses poor discretion in the duties of his office. We have learned, in discussing the escape, [redacted]

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[redacted] that the men, because of the attitude of the Deputy Warden and the Warden in apparently ignoring their recommendations for corrections, have assumed an attitude of indifference. This attitude of indifference is explained by them in that it is almost necessary that they assume this attitude because any suggestions that are made for corrections are taken by the Deputy Warden as a personal grievance and a personal reflection upon his work and not as constructive criticism for the benefit of the institution.

In talking to individual officers, while interrogating them with regard to this official investigation, they give the impression and hint at the lack of harmony and the low ebb of morale, but also express their fear of discussing these conditions because they fear their jobs. With regard to this fear element, [redacted] advised me that it is his responsibility to keep quiet and order in the cell block while he is on duty and that he has known of instances where contraband has been smuggled in the main cell block or that irregularities were noticed and he was not notified by the Deputy Warden or anyone else. He stated to me that he thought that they were probably afraid to tell him because they seemed "scared to death that somebody's going to go tell the newspapers what's going on over there", so that they will even hold out on the man in charge of the cell block, even to the point of refusing him the right to see the records of certain criminals incarcerated therein, although it was pointed out that he wanted to do that in order to learn something of their background so that he could better handle them. There was also brought to our

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attention during these interviews the fact that there is bitterness that there are cliques, and the [redacted] main informants here, [redacted] [redacted] ather bitterly accuse the Warden and the Deputy Warden of being responsible for the trouble, claiming that it is due to lack of proper administration.

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#### THE TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

[redacted] advised me that it was generally understood on the Island that the prisoners could "bargain" with the Deputy Warden on just anything that they wanted to, and he explained what bargaining meant in that he would make a deal with them to grant them certain wishes in return for their not causing any disturbances. He gives as an example the fact that prisoners have whatever cells they desire. He explains that this is done in several ways, either by requesting a particular cell, which he says is given them, or when they are put in certain cells which are not next to the man they want to be next to, if there is a vacancy, they continue to stop up the lavatories until they get to the right cell and then it stops. He gives an example of certain prisoners being together who wished to be together, this being an incident which I could not check, because at the time this information was brought to my attention, MR. BENNETT was on the Island and it was deemed inadvisable for me to go any further at the present time. It will be an easy matter to check, however. This is the specific example, existing at present, where inmates who might have a reason to cell near one another are permitted to do so. [redacted] called attention to the RETTICH gang, and he stated that I would be surprised to know that RETTICH, DUGAN and GEARY all cell in three adjoining cells. MILLER ("COUNT LUSTIG") is in the fourth cell, CLEY is just beneath, and HARRIGAN is within hailing distance.

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[redacted] also advised me that the discipline is such that prisoners can become very abusive to the guards, and upon complaint to the Deputy Warden, nothing is done about it; that he has had instances of this occur and when he would go back into the cell block, the prisoners would swear at him and tell him he had better not try to cause them any trouble because they would have the Deputy Warden put him on the outside and get him out of the way. [redacted] also stated that he was on duty in the work shops after CLINE was killed and that it was his observation that the work could be done in approximately one and a half hours each day, although it took them all day to do it. He stated that he realizes that he is in disfavor with the prisoners because he insisted that they work all of the time. He attributes this laxity to the Deputy Warden's attitude, saying that he, himself, has had to fill out work sheets for men, showing that they had done

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work in the mat shop, when they actually had been sitting around doing nothing, in order that they could get good industrial time on it. He said that men were actually brought down to the work shops out of the cells when there was nothing to do, which, in his opinion, was a dangerous practice because it gave them a chance to loaf around, make escape tools and to stand around and "case" the whole work area. He added that at one time he had to get "DOC" BARKER down off of a table where he was standing, looking over the whole area. He observed also that the working conditions are such that a man by putting up the right kind of a story to the Deputy Warden can get himself in any place or line of work that he so desires and that it is common gossip among the prisoners that "you just have to give the right story to the Deputy".

In direct contrast to this, it has been brought to our attention by [REDACTED] that when guards want to get rid of a man and had, in their mind, a good reason why he should be removed from a certain detail or taken from a certain area, that that was not done as a matter of course at the guard's recommendation, which he felt left them at a great disadvantage. He gives as an example that a week before Officer CLINE was killed in the mat shop, information was obtained to the effect that there was something wrong, and CLINE made the complaint, as did he [REDACTED] to Senior Officer GEORGE BOATMAN, who was in charge of the cell house, who had the cells of FRANKLIN and LUCAS searched, wherein was found contraband of two packages of raisins, which was felt by them to be indicative of the fact that they were planning to go and that these were emergency rations. He also stated that on or about the 18th of December 1936, in his mind several days after the escape of COLE and ROE, Deputy Warden MILLER came down and told [REDACTED] that he was going to put another man on the tower [REDACTED] because he had definite information that three more men were going out and that their method was to be by coming out of a window, climbing over the wire and getting to the guard in that watch tower. He stated that MILLER'S method of handling this, rather than moving those men, was to put another guard on the top, whereas the subordinate officers felt that the proper way to have handled that situation was to remove those men from that area.

In connection with the COLE-ROE escape, it was mentioned by [REDACTED] that at that time the guard on duty in the model tower (name not yet verified by us) had his hand in a cast, having had it injured in beating some prisoner, and that it would have been impossible for him to shoot. We, of course, at the writing of this letter have not been able to verify this, but [REDACTED] insists that it is common talk and knowledge among the guards that this was the case.

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[redacted] have also stated that cell block "D", or the isolation cell block, is very much the type of country club penitentiary setup that one reads about. They claim that instead of the men being punished when placed in this cell block, that that cell block is the best ventilated, has an excellent view of the Bay area and city, that the men have no work to do, have all the reading material they desire, and, in fact, being placed in isolation is very desirable.

[redacted] stated that a guard at times cannot tell a prisoner what he has to do in ordering him to work, stating that he has known instances where prisoners have refused to take orders, saying that the Deputy Warden tells them what they have to do and that nothing is done about the situation when the matter is called to the Deputy Warden's attention.

#### WEAKNESSES IN D BLOCK ISOLATION

"D" block isolation is that section of Alcatraz cell block which is used for those men who are placed in segregation, more or less permanently and who do not have to work. There are approximately 22 men in isolation on two tiers. Whereas B and C blocks of cells are made of tool-proof steel, in which the ordinary run of prisoners are kept, D block, where the worst prisoners are kept, is of the ordinary steel bars which can be easily cut and which are hangovers from the time when the prison was used as a military disciplinary barracks.

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[redacted] advised me that he understood that the outside window bars were of the latest tool-proof steel and that he felt fairly secure in feeling that they could never get out of a window on that side. However, it might be mentioned at this time that the condition of the wall must be in pretty bad shape, because while Agent FARLAND and I were having Deputy Warden MILLER point out to us on the map certain points of importance in the case, MR. STEERE, who was repairing after the break, reported to him that it would be impossible to place a grill over the damaged area of the window, due to the fact that the minute they would begin hammering, the wall would crumble.

I wish also to call to your attention the fact that the prisoners who escaped were in the worst possible cells to be observed by the man on the west gun gallery, who was the only person who could cover D block when the regular guard on foot was not making the rounds.

Junior Guard C. Y. HURST, who was on duty at the time of the escape,

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stated that the only protection that an officer on duty in the cell house had was that furnished by the officer on duty in the gun gallery and that the officer on duty in the gun gallery could not see the cells which were occupied by the inmates who escaped.

[REDACTED] b7c b7d  
[REDACTED] stated that it was impossible to see the man on the gun gallery when going along the cells from which the men escaped. He stated that he made a suggestion to move the men up closer to the west gun gallery in order to overcome this weak spot. He does not recall exactly when he made this recommendation but believes it was about a month ago. His recollection is not clear either as to whether it was in regular memorandum form or on a regular "63" form, which is used for suggestions. He was very emphatic about the point that he had pointed out this weakness and that nothing was done about it. He stated that these men could not have had a better spot to work in than that in which they were located. He also pointed out that when he came into D block from C block, a warning was repeatedly sounded and that this had been called to the attention of the Deputy Warden but that nothing had been done about it. That there was some sort of a signal it is known, because the notes recovered from the lavatories after the time of the escape specifically state that the signal was a "cluck", the note reading as follows: "I heard Jack cluck a couple of times. He will have bull on case\*\*\*"

[REDACTED] b7c b7d  
[REDACTED] He stated that immediately after taking over the post he makes a routine inspection and immediately upon completion of the inspection, about 4:10 each evening, proceeds to the north end of the gun gallery, which, incidentally, is the farthest point from the post in which he would have a clear vision of D block isolation. He must remain at this particular spot, which commands a view of the corridor between blocks A and B, until such time as the inmates assemble for their evening mess, whereupon he goes to the port which commands a view of the messhall, at which position he stays until the inmates are returned to their cells for the nightly lockup and then after giving the keys to the officer who makes the count of the inmates confined in the hospital, he again returns to the post at the north end of the cell house, remaining there until the nightly lockup and final count is completed; then he returns to the small port which commands a view of the main dining hall, remaining there until such time as the entire number of inmates assigned to kitchen duty are returned to their cells, which is approximately 5:30 every night.

[REDACTED] b7c b7d  
[REDACTED] states that these are rigid orders to be carried out without

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variance, although for this period of time, which amounts to about one hour and fifty minutes, he does not have any opportunity to observe the activities which might transpire in D block isolation. It will be noted that he could not see the cells in which the escaped men were locked, and this explains why they could work out of their own cells, cross the corridor and climb up on the wall, without fear of being molested, because they could bank on approximately one hour and fifty minutes when they knew that the only man who could see them was tied up at another point.

[redacted] stated that conditions, in his mind, had become acute of late and that he had surveyed the situation, because he had noted that the entire inmate population was uneasy, and that the entire cell house was pervaded with that tenseness which is noticeable prior to a state of emergency. He said that he had suggested to Captain P. J. MADIGAN that all of the doors of the isolation block be checked, especially as to the bolts which are on the hinges and have in the past been unscrewed without aid of tools whatsoever, allowing the inmates to remove the isolation doors and set them by the side of their cells.

Following is a suggestion letter written by [redacted] on January 9, 1939, and placed on the Warden's desk on January 9:

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"May I submit for your consideration three items which I deem necessary to further the security of this Institution?

"First: i. e. The upper gallery floor in D Block, Isolation, be extended until it coincides with the outer wall of the building proper. That both ends be likewise sealed off; the one facing the Gun Gallery to be made of unbreakable glass, and that the utility corridor also be sealed with sound-proof material. This structural change would for stall the continuous passing of contraband, and eliminate most of the causes from which commotion in the Cell-house originates. Further, it would in no way interfere with the present lighting, heating, or ventilation of the Cell-house proper, while at the same time these facilities in the newly created isolation block would remain adequate. In all it would result in keeping those inmates who need additional security or disciplinary action to be housed in maximum security cells instead of being in the least secure cells as is the present practice.

"Second: That a section, at least two panels, of grill screen be placed on and attached to the bars of both Gun Galleries. This would not only afford added protection to the Officer here stationed from thrown missiles which could be expected in times of commotion in the cell-block; but it would

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also end the situation wherein the Gas Grenades, Gas Masks, and Night Sticks, could be procured by the inmates; this later being especially true in the day time when numerous inmates are consigned to orderly duties, as they have but to await that time when the Officer is called to the upper level in order to procure these articles. Such a screen would in no way interfere with the vision or impede the action of the Officer in time of stress.

"Third: That the practice of counting the inmates confined in isolation and solitary while regular inmate mess be discontinued and changed until such time as they are again locked securely in their cells. That the grill barricade be kept locked at this time. This slight change of routine would circumvent the possibility of attack both front and rear, in a time of emergency. The inmates in isolation are well aware of the fact that the Officer in the West Gallery must remain at a certain point in order to view the inmates at mess, and he is therefore unable to give protection to the Officer making this count. These inmates have in the past made keys. Material is ever at hand with which to make more keys; therefore in order to avert the possibility of them overpowering the Officer and getting possession of keys to the entire interior of the cell house, it should be discontinued."

A copy of this letter is being retained in our files, having been obtained from ██████████. It will be noted in this letter that he points out another weakness of the whole cell block--namely, that prisoners can obtain gas grenades, gas masks and night sticks without much trouble.

We have made several requests for information regarding periodic checks on testing of the cell bars and window bars, but so far we have been unable to determine that any records are maintained on these checks or when they are held.

██████████ pointed out that his duties on the west gun gallery are so explicit and confining and that the officer on duty has to do certain little things which allow the men in isolation to be utterly unobserved on occasions to the extent of one or maybe one and a half hours at a time when the inmates are in the messhall or when the inmates confined to the kitchen are still in the kitchen, after the regular guard force has completed their duties, and the inmates are left in charge of but one officer, the kitchen guard, and it is very easy for the inmates of isolation at such times to commit any act unmolested.

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Junior Guard C. Y. HURST stated that "about 5:00 A. M. it is the custom for the convicts employed in the kitchen to report for duty. I wake them up, having been furnished with a list who were required to do that work, and as a rule they go into the kitchen about 5 o'clock. About 15 minutes prior to the kitchen detail going to the kitchen, the guard in the east gun gallery goes out back of the kitchen to watch the outside of the kitchen where he remains, leaving no one to guard the cell block, except the guard on duty in the west gun gallery. As a matter of fact, he is the only one that can see the isolation cells. However, he cannot see the doors of the cells. He can see the corridor and can see the windows where the convicts made their escape, and when the convicts go to the dining room to eat or to the kitchen, his duty is to watch the dining room and kitchen through the dining room, and while doing that it is impossible to watch the isolation block. I also wish to state the guard in the west gun gallery has specific orders to keep the officer in charge of the cell house under constant surveillance. However, if he watches the dining room, he cannot do both at the same time, watch the cell house and the dining room too."

#### MEANS OF GETTING TOOLS INTO CELL BLOCKS

It has been called to our attention that tools of escape might be brought into cell blocks through the kitchen or kitchen basement, it being pointed out that there is no screen between the cell block and the kitchen and that there are a number of cell block orderlies working around in that area constantly who might very easily have something slipped to them by the kitchen detail; and, further, that the shake-down given the kitchen help is done in a very slipshod manner and that it would not be very hard at all for those of the kitchen help to actually slip something out as they came out, and they could even bring something with the food, which was admitted by the Warden to me, himself.

[REDACTED] stated to me that the shake-down of the kitchen men was perfunctory, and it is noticed that P. F. REED in his articles on Alcatraz, appearing in the San Francisco Examiner, also mentions this means of obtaining tools in the cell block.

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It is known by us, as has been pointed out in the investigations conducted on the Island heretofore, that tools are made in the blacksmith shop, and it is claimed by the guards that the so-called metal eye, the instrument which is known as the "snitcher", is not infallible, and as is pointed out in the statement by WILLIAM MARTIN, one of the escaped men,

Mr. John Edgar Hoover  
January 16, 1939  
Page #10

these instruments can and are regularly beaten by the prisoners, so this is obviously a weakness. The Warden advised me that it was possible that tools might be mixed in with supplies for the kitchen, and it is generally agreed by those persons talked to by the Agents that it is not extremely difficult to get tools and materials for escape purposes out of the work area. The instrument that WILLIAM MARTIN claims was used to break the tool-proof steel bar—namely, a thumb screw jack—was made in the shops, as well as the files that were used. MARTIN also makes the statement in his written statement that there are knives all over the place, which are mostly of brass, which does not react at all on the "snitcher" and that these knives are not found in the mattresses either when they are shaken down. It was MARTIN'S statement that these knives were intended for the Warden, that the men hated him, and that that was their purpose in bringing them in. MARTIN makes the assertion in his written statement that STAMPHILL, while a cell orderly, was seen to go over to isolation block, and it was believed that he had hidden some contraband. A check apparently was made by MR. SHUTTLEWORTH, who was at the penitentiary at that time; however, we can find no record of this. MARTIN claims that they missed the material in the shake-down, which is possible in view of the fact that STAMPHILL was later caught with a knife with a four inch blade, stolen from the kitchen, which knife was found in his cell, for which he was placed in solitary on November 22, 1938. It has been suggested that he had committed this violation in order that he could get into isolation to effect his escape with the tools already planted there.

#### MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO MAKE ESCAPE TOOLS

To those of us who have found it necessary to proceed in the work area around the blacksmith shop, it is obvious that there is an unlimited source of material for escape tools. With the number of men who work in that area, with the limited supervision, which has already been reported in detail in regard to the COLE-ROE escape, it is easy to see how tools can be made by these men when unobserved. There is likewise material in the shops, which is verified by the shake-down that was made the night after the escape, when a mitre box saw was found concealed; also a spad, which is an instrument similar to a putty knife, used to spread printer's ink. This was found to have been sharpened to a knife-blade edge on one side and a saw-blade edge on the other. In addition, there was found a thin steel bar, which had on one side been converted into a saw edge. There were also found two heavy pieces of wire about 30 inches in length, on which the ends had been curled. In the opinion of some of the prison officials, these were used to push contraband from one cell to another.

It was also called to our attention that when they shook down the

Mr. John Edgar Hoover  
January 16, 1939  
Page #11

kitchen after the recent break, a sack full of miscellaneous material was taken out, and at this time we have been unable to determine just exactly what kind of material it was. As to whether it was all concealed or whether part of it was found concealed and some just lying about, we do not know.

Also, during the shake-down, there were found two saw blades and a hand screw jack on the top of D cell block, the isolation section. There was no indication that these had been used. If this had been available to any of the prisoners in that section, they could easily have escaped with it.

It has also been suggested that musical instruments might be a source of escape material, particularly that a steel guitar or banjo string is/very likely instrument to use to saw a steel frame.

As far as material to cover up the work that they are doing, it was admitted in this instance that putty was not used, but rather wax from the floor was scraped up, mixed with a little paint, picked from the cell walls or bars, which, when covering the point of cutting, appeared the same as the paint.

Razor blades are suggested by the guards as a material for escape; however, it is known that there is a close check on razor blades, and no further information has been developed regarding razor blades.

As to the means of disposal of contraband after the purpose has been served, the statement of WILLIAM MARTIN in this case states that they were disposed of by being thrown down the lavatory. This is logical because they did not in any way want the prison authorities to know that they had these instruments of escape, because having discovered them in some shake-down, they would have immediately caused a thorough check of the bars to see whether they had been used. It is suggested that this possibly was the means of disposing of the thumb jack screw.

The recommendation has been made and is being followed out at this time to use a magnet on the lavatories, because tools still may be available for escape which are reposing in the lavatory drains, as it was called to our attention that they had devised a means of tying a long string to a tool and letting it go down the drain until it rested normally and then the string would float in reach of the arm, but still out of sight in a shake-down.

Mr. John Edgar Hoover  
January 16, 1939  
Page #12

The raft which was recovered by which the prisoners intended to escape from the Island after being in the water was found to be made of timbers, driftwood, a chair, and material which was available floating around the Island. The photographs already forwarded to you best describe this material; however, there is on the Island and was at the time of the escape, a number of piles of lumber, which, when examined by the Warden and myself, were very similar to that of which the raft was made. The only statement that we have obtained to date from MARTIN is to the effect that the raft lumber was obtained from driftwood along the shore and from wood in the vicinity of the dock. However, material exactly like that in the raft is piled and thrown around on the parade ground, which undoubtedly was in the near vicinity of the building, since it is not known exactly what their direction was after having gone down towards the water level from the window of escape. This wood is being used in construction work on the Island and makes excellent raft material. The binding material used to hold the wood together was sheets taken from the cells.

We have not endeavored to go into this source of material as a particular phase of this investigation, but the matters mentioned herein have come to our attention through the regular interrogation along other lines.

ALARMS

Questioned as to what part he took in the apprehension of the escaped men, [REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] and immediately went to his room and there was unable to hear the siren or whistles, as were a number of other men sleeping in the same quarters. He did not know of the escape until the next morning, when he went to breakfast. Agent FARLAND was also advised by DR. HUNTER, the Protestant Chaplain, that he also had not heard the alarm. It is to be noted that the siren is directly over the Administration Building. This matter of failure to hear the alarms, we thought should be called to your attention.

There was also apparently considerable confusion, particularly as to whether there was an escape or a fire, inasmuch as Deputy Warden MILLER stated that he instructed that both the fire alarm and the siren be sounded in order that everyone might be awakened. This is borne out by W. O. MRSINGER, dental interne, who stated that he was awakened by the blowing of the siren, and he immediately dressed and started towards the direction, at which time he observed the launch McDowell coming into the dock and later inquiry by him at the dock disclosed that there had been a

Mr. John Edgar Hoover  
January 16, 1939  
Page #13

prison break. MR. ORSINGER stated that he had never been advised as to the signal for a prison break.

We also have learned that three men obtained the fire truck, believing there was a fire and were on the road with the fire engine, having gotten as far as the canteen, when they were turned back, being advised that it was an escape.

WEAKNESSES STILL APPARENT

[redacted] advised me that they are getting ready to go from the power house. This rumble was picked up by Agent FARLAND and myself several months ago. [redacted] stated that DeSHELLY, BARTLETT'S partner, who is suspected in this break of having possibly assisted in getting tools, because of his ability as an engineer, is now working in the electrical shop. [redacted] explains to me that from the laundry, where a great many of the prisoners are employed, men can go down to the laundry store room, from which store room, they can go to the electrical shop, which is adjoining. There is just a grill between the store room and the electrical shop, which can be easily cut. He said that DeSHELLY works in this area unobserved for as long as an hour at a time and that there is just a four inch wall between the electrical shop and the power house, which could be very easily knocked through, and from then on, if a weapon were obtainable, there could be a wholesale escape out of the laundry down through the store room, the electrical shop, and the power house, merely by killing the guard in the powerhouse tower, either by shooting him or setting fire to the tower, which is wooden, as he is absolutely alone and uncovered. From that point, the only thing that would have to be done to get the last guard out of the way would be to dispose of the guard in the tower over the docks and, with a wholesale escape in mind, that could be easily accomplished, particularly if some weapon were available, and then nothing could stop them from getting boats or taking over the Island.

The statement of WILLIAM MARTIN also mentions the fact that a crew of convicts in the kitchen had made preparations for escape and that they were planning to take women and children as hostages when they went. To our knowledge at this time, although certain things were taken from the kitchen, we have not had brought to our attention any sawed windows or anything of that type which might have been ready for a break.

Our attention now has been brought confidentially to the fact

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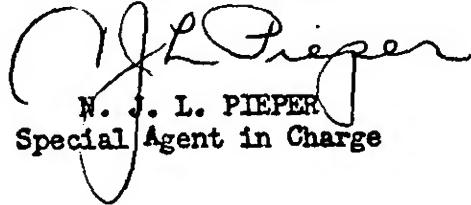
Mr. John Edgar Hoover  
January 16, 1939  
Page #14

that about the time of the COLE-ROE escape, there was a window sawed in the hospital.

Junior Officer C. V. HURST stated that he was informed several days ago that convict RUFUS FRANKLIN, #335, tried to smuggle a letter out to someone in the blacksmith shop, probably BARTLETT, to furnish him with hack saws; however, before they had the opportunity to deliver the letter, he was searched and threw the letter in the lavatory, where it was recovered by Guard PEPPER and turned over to the authorities.

As stated in the beginning of this letter, we are merely reporting to you what we have heard and what has come to our attention without any effort being made to verify, except where it could be done without appearing to be making an administrative investigation. I, personally, am not satisfied with taking some of these statements without verification, realizing that they might be prompted by personal prejudices or jealousies or personalities, but these are the things that we are getting from the men, and, taking them for their value as such, I felt that they would be of great interest to you.

Very truly yours,

  
N. J. L. PIEPER  
Special Agent in Charge

NJLP/mjd  
AIR MAIL  
SPECIAL DELIVERY

EAT:MC  
76-4175

RECORDED 76-4175-11X January 24, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF PRISONS

For your information, I am transmitting herewith a copy of the report of Special Agent in Charge N. J. L. Pieper, dated at San Francisco, California, January 17, 1939, in connection with the unsuccessful attempt of five convicts to escape from the Alcatraz Island Penitentiary. I am also transmitting herewith one copy each of the following memoranda which I addressed to the Attorney General on the dates indicated: memorandum of January 14, 1939; second memorandum of January 14, 1939; memorandum of January 19, 1939.

With reference to my memorandum of January 19, 1939, transmitting a copy of Mr. Pieper's personal and confidential letter of January 18, 1939, concerning administrative matters at the Penitentiary, it will be noted that some data and material were obtained from the prison employees on a confidential basis. I would greatly appreciate your handling this information concerning the identity of these employees who furnished information to the Bureau in a most discreet manner.

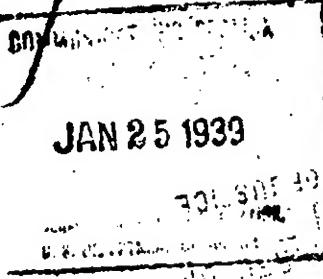
I am also transmitting herewith a complete set of the photographs which were made during the course of the investigation of this break.

Very truly yours,

John Edgar Hoover  
Director

Mr. Tolson.....  
Mr. Nathan.....  
Mr. E. A. Tamm.....  
Mr. Clegg.....  
Mr. Coffey.....  
Mr. Crowl.....  
Mr. Egan.....  
Mr. Foxworth.....  
Mr. Glavin.....  
Mr. Harbo.....  
Mr. Lester.....  
Mr. McIntire.....  
Mr. Nichols.....  
Mr. Quinn Tamm.....  
Mr. Tracy.....  
Miss Gandy.....

Inclosures



RECORDED COPY FILED IN 62-29076-254X1

62

FEDERA

STIGATION

1939.

The Director  
 Mr. Nathan  
 Mr. Tolson ✓  
 Mr. Clegg  
 Mr. Foxworth  
 Mr. Glavin ✓  
 ✓ Mr. Nichols ✓  
 Mr. Crowl

Files Section  
 Personnel Files  
 Identification Division  
 Technical Laboratory  
 Mechanical Division  
 Chief Clerk's Office  
 Mr. Tracy

SUPERVISORS

Mr. Balch  
 Mr. Brennan  
 Mr. Carson  
 Mr. Chambers  
 Mr. Cornelius  
 Mr. Coulter

Mr. Drayton  
 Mr. Guerin  
 Mr. Hayden  
 Mr. Hogan  
 Mr. Kramer  
 Mr. Lawler

Mr. McIntire  
 Mr. Pennington  
 Mr. Van Pelt

Miss Gandy  
 Mr. Rice  
 Mrs. Morton  
 Mr. West  
 Mr. Gauthier  
 Typists - 5724  
 See Me

\* \* \*  
 Bring file up to date  
 Send File  
 Correct  
 Call me regarding this  
 Note and Return  
 Search, serialize and  
route  
 Stenographers 5730  
 Stenographers 5706  
 Stenographers 5724

E. A. TAMM - 5734

63

35390

JUL 1939  
Time - 9 P. M.

January 18, 1939

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. TALM

*Attn*

I called Mr. Pieper in San Francisco concerning the Alcatraz escape and told him that we were sending him four copies of the photographs which he had forwarded to the Bureau. I told Mr. Pieper that I would like to have two more volumes of the photographs to be made for the Bureau after he receives the photographs from the Bureau, as well as two more copies of the charts, since the original sets of pictures and charts were given to the Attorney General.

Pieper stated that he had completed dictating on the confidential report for the Bureau concerning the escape and that the Agents are just about finished their investigation at the island. He stated Rice and Farland were there today and Mr. Bennett was also there, Bennett asking questions of the Agents. Mr. Bennett also asked Farland to come to the island tomorrow when Bennett is going to reinterview some of the prisoners. I asked Pieper why Bennett wants Farland present and he stated that Bennett wants him there to answer questions. I told Pieper it would be all right to have Farland there tomorrow to watch things and let us know of any developments but told Pieper to warn Farland concerning the situation of Bennett and Schilder. Mr. Pieper advised that both Mr. Bennett and Mr. Schilder are living on the island.

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Mr. Pieper called attention to one of the photographs showing the window from the outside in which it could be noted that the walls are crumbling. He stated one of the Agents overheard a conversation between a mechanic and the Deputy Warden at which time the mechanic stated it was impossible to put a grill over the window because the walls would crumble when they were installing the grill. He stated that Block D of the Isolation Section is in an old building which is not tool proof. He also stated that the magnet search is progressing but nothing has developed from this as the chains go down at a steep angle to the ocean. He stated further that several saw blades and another hand jack has been found in the isolation section. Mr. Pieper advised me that he had gotten a copy of the letter written by [REDACTED] advising that it was impossible to see the cells in Block D of the Isolation Section from the guardroom, the letter being dated January 17, 1939.

1/17/39  
"I told Pieper to get the reports to the Bureau on file as soon as possible.

P. M.  
MAIL ROOM OF DIRECTOR  
FEB 17 1939

Very truly yours,  
J. Edgar Hoover  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

76-4175-12  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
JAN 18 1939

64

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Room 5744

1939.

To: Director  
Mr. Nathan  
Mr. Clegg  
✓ Mr. Edward Tamm  
Mr. Glavin  
Mr. Crowl  
Miss Gandy  
Mr. Tracy  
Mr. Harbo  
Mr. Renneberger  
Mr. Nichols  
Mr. Quinn Tamm  
Personnel Files Section  
Files Section  
Miss Sheaffer

See Me

For Appropriate Action

Send File

Note and Return

Clyde Tolson

65

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

To: COMMUNICATIONS SECTION.

Transmit the following message to: **PEP, DM**

JANUARY 17, 1939

Code

SAC-LOS ANGELES

ALCATRAZ ATTEMPTED ESCAPE IMMEDIATELY FORWARD PHOTOGRAPHS SUBMITTED

MY LETTER JANUARY SIXTEEN WITH COPY OF LETTER TO SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE

**SPECIAL DELIVERY**

**HOOVER**

Salter, Price

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
| Mr. Tolson     | ..... |
| Mr. Nathan     | ..... |
| J. R. A. Tamm  | ..... |
| Mr. Clapp      | ..... |
| Mr. Coffey     | ..... |
| Mr. Crowley    | ..... |
| Mr. Tracy      | ..... |
| Mr. Foxworth   | ..... |
| Mr. Glavin     | ..... |
| Mr. Harbo      | ..... |
| Mr. Lester     | ..... |
| Mr. McAllister | ..... |
| Mr. Nichols    | ..... |
| Mr. Quinn-Tamm | ..... |
| Mr. Tracy      | ..... |
| Mr. Crowley    | ..... |

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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
LABORATORY  
BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, 850 F. ST., W. C. 2, WASH. D. C. 20535  
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FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

JAN 18 1939

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

.....Per

66

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

JAN 17 1939

TELETYPE

Mr. Tu  
Mr. Natha  
Mr. E. A. T...  
Mr. Cleag ....  
Mr. Coffey ....  
Mr. Crowl.....  
Mr. Dewey....  
Mr. Egan.....  
Mr. Forwards...  
Mr. Glavin.....  
Mr. Harbo ....  
Mr. Lester.....  
Mr. McInire...  
Mr. Nichols...  
Mr. Quinn T...  
Mr. Tracy.....  
Miss Gandy....  
*Blue ink*

8 /  
FBI SAN FRANCISCO

1-17-39

T 5:00 PM

MR

DIRECTOR

ALCATRAZ ESCAPE. [REDACTED] REPORT DICTATED BEING TRANSCRIBED TONIGHT  
AMSD SHOULD ARRIVE BUREAU THURSDAY NOON. NO INFORMATION DEVELOPED  
NOT HERETOFORE REPORTED TELEPHONICALLY. PRISON AUTHORITIES INQUIRY  
STILL PROCEEDING. PRISONERS INTERROGATED HAVE REFUSED TO MAKE ANY  
STATEMENT TO DIRECTOR BENNETT. SEARCH FOR TOOLS OF ESCAPE NEGATIVE.  
NO RESULTS FROM LAVATORY SEARCHES. AUTHORITIES STILL SHAKING DOWN  
CELL HOUSE AREA. OUR INVESTIGATION SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE.

PIEPER

END

OK FBI WASHINGTON DC THT

RECORDED

76-4175-14

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| FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION |    |
| JAN 18 1939                     |    |
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FBI BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

JAN 17 1939

POSTAL

Mr. Tolson .....  
Mr. Nathan .....  
Mr. E. A. Tamm .....  
Mr. Clegg .....  
Mr. Coffey .....  
Mr. Crowl .....  
Mr. Dawrey .....  
Mr. Egan .....  
Mr. Foxworth .....  
Mr. Gravin .....  
Mr. Harlan .....  
Mr. Lester .....  
Mr. McNamee .....  
Mr. Nichols .....  
Mr. Quinn .....  
Mr. Tracy .....  
Miss Candy .....

WP 16 GOVT COLLECT

F SANFRANCISCO CALIF 16 1053P

DIRECTOR

FBI JUSTICE WASHN DC

ALCATRAZ ESCAPE PERSONAL CONFIDENTIAL LETTER DIRECTOR AMASD  
BUREAU TONIGHT WEATHER ~~PERMITTING~~ PERMITTING ARRIVE WASHINGTON  
WEDNESDAY NOON

PIEPER.

BIR2  
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76-4175-15

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
JAN 18 1939  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
68

35397

## FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Form No. 1  
THIS CASE ORIGINATED AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

FILE NO. 76-347

|   |                           |   |   |
|---|---------------------------|---|---|
| REPORT MADE AT<br>San Francisco, Calif.   | DATE WHEN MADE<br>1/17/39 | PERIOD FOR WHICH MADE<br>1/13-17/39           | REPORT MADE BY<br>N. J. L. PIEPER - MJD - MIA-FBI |
| TITLE<br>ARTHUR L. BARKER, alias DOC;<br>DALE STAMPHILL, RUFUS McCAIN,<br>HENRY YOUNG, WILLIAM MARTIN |                           | CHARACTER OF CASE<br>ESCAPED FEDERAL PRISONER |   |

## SYNOPSIS OF FACTS:

At approximately 3:37 A. M. 1/13/39 prisoner discovered missing from D cell block Alcatraz Penitentiary and subsequent check revealed BARKER, STAMPHILL, McCAIN, YOUNG and MARTIN confined to adjoining isolation cells in D cell block had effected escape from cells and cell house by sawing regular bars and forcing tool-proof bar with thumb screw jack. All prisoners located on beach of Alcatraz Island. STAMPHILL and BARKER wounded while resisting recapture. BARKER died later. YOUNG, McCAIN and MARTIN surrendered. Apprehensions and return to confinement completed before 5:30 A. M. 1/13/39 by prison officials. All five endeavored to construct raft of driftwood, lumber and other available material, using clothes and strips of sheets to bind raft together. All subjects except BARKER interviewed and decline to make statements. MARTIN informed Deputy Warden E. J. MILLER that STAMPHILL obtained saws and screw jack from unknown person in blacksmith shop, and rendering of bars insecure by their use accomplished as result of efforts of all subjects during a period of more than a month. Tools used flushed down toilets. Pertinent statements of Alcatraz officers set out.

## COPIES DESTROYED

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|---|--|--|
| APPROVED AND<br>FORWARDED<br>I. L. [Signature]  | SPECIAL AGENT<br>IN CHARGE<br>N. J. Pieper | DO NOT WRITE IN THESE SPACES<br>76-4175   16 |
| COPIES OF THIS REPORT   |  |  |
| 4 - Bureau (2 encls.) AMASD<br>1 - St. Paul<br>1 - Oklahoma City 1 - Chicago<br>1 - USA, San Fran 1 - Seattle<br>3 - San Francisco (2 encls.) |  |  |

Details:

This report is the joint investigation of Special Agents J. H. RICE, A. E. FARLAND, L. H. RICHMOND, and Special Agent in Charge N. J. L. PIEPER. In view of the fact that there would be confusion as to the office of origin, since the prisoners were sentenced from various places, and further, in view of the fact that the prisoners are not at large, it has been deemed expedient to carry the San Francisco office as the office of origin.

This investigation is predicated upon a telephone call received by Special Agent in Charge N. J. L. PIEPER approximately a few minutes after 4 A. M. on the morning of Friday, January 13, 1939, at which time MR. FRED REICHEL, Secretary to Warden JOHNSTON at Alcatraz, telephoned, advising that 5 men had escaped from the cell house. He was unable at that time to furnish the names or to advise whether they had been successful in escaping from the Island. He advised that the Coast Guard and the police in the Bay Area had been notified.

Immediately arrangements were made to mobilize the Agents in the San Francisco Division office. Agent in Charge PIEPER telephonically checked with the San Francisco Police Department and the Coast Guard to determine whether the proper coverage was being maintained, and MR. TANL, of the Bureau, was telephonically advised. Constant communication was maintained between Agent in Charge PIEPER and the interested agencies and the Island, Agent in Charge PIEPER being advised as to the progress of the search and the results, which will not be reviewed here, since they are going to be covered in detail in this report. At approximately 6 A. M. it was determined that at approximately 5:00 A. M., January 13, 1939, the five escaped prisoners — ARTHUR (DOC) BARKER, DALE STAMPHILL, RUFUS McCAIN, HENRY YOUNG and WILLIAM MARTIN — two of whom were wounded (BARKER and STAMPHILL), had been returned to confinement.

AT ALCATRAZ ISLAND, CALIFORNIA

Agents FARLAND and RICE were dispatched to Alcatraz Island on the 7:55 A. M. boat to begin investigation there, and Special Agent in Charge PIEPER, together with Special Agent R. E. LETHERT, who took the necessary photographs of the escape, proceeded by the next boat to the Island.

Investigation disclosed that at the time of the escape there was on Alcatraz Island and in the vicinity of the San Francisco area

a very bad fog. The official weather reports of MR. H. DAVIS, in charge of the Alcatraz Lighthouse, Department of Commerce, reflect the following from January 12, 1939, through noon, January 13, 1939:

1/12/39 continuous fog started and horn blowing north end 10:15 P. M. - south end at 10:25 P. M., blowing continuously until 11 A. M., 1/13/39, when north end was shut down-11:40 A. M. - south end shut down. Visibility very bad, practically nil.

In order that the weather conditions might be further clarified, it was the personal observation of the agents that this was one of the foggiest nights experienced this year. The newspapers carried several stories as to boats running aground and further stories to the effect that this was the foggiest night of the year.

The records at Alcatraz reflect that there three periodic full-count checks in the period between midnight and 6 A. M., namely- 12 midnight, 3 A. M. and 6 A. M. The records disclose that the 12 o'clock check was made and that there were found to be no prisoners missing. The records disclose that the 3 A. M. full-count check was made without any prisoners being missing. The cell house count sheets, which are being maintained in the San Francisco office file, disclose that on January 12, 1939, at midnight, the count was as follows:

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| B block   | 131      |
| C block   | 130      |
| Hospital  | 10       |
| Isolation | 21       |
| Solitary  | <u>1</u> |
| Total     | 293      |

The 3 A. M. count on January 13, 1939, shows the same. The 6 A. M. count on January 13, 1939 shows the following:

|           |          |
|-----------|----------|
| B block   | 131      |
| C block   | 130      |
| Hospital  | 13       |
| Isolation | 18       |
| Solitary  | <u>1</u> |
| Total     | 293      |

These cell house count sheets are signed by C. Y. HURST, Junior Officer.

In order that the reading of this report will be made easier